THE IRAN CRISIS

The Nation.

A MILLION LITTLE LIES
Matthew Flamm

BLACKS AND GAY RIGHTS
Gary Younge

THE PARTY OF DAVOS
Jeff Faux

RUBÉN DARÍO'S POETIC REVOLUTION
Roberto González Echevarría

FEB. 13, 2006
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THE NEW FACE OF THE CAMPUS LEFT

by SAM GRAHAM-FELSEN

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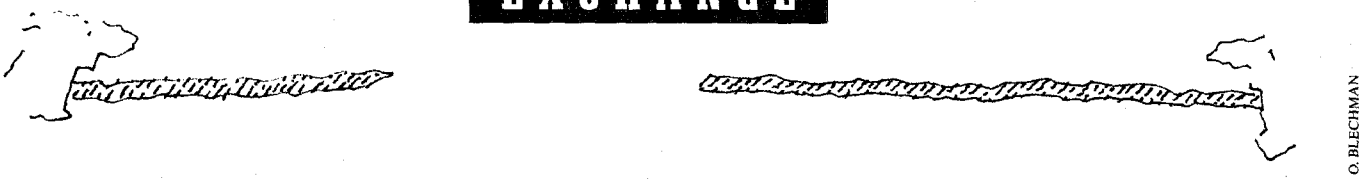

R. O. BLECHMAN

NYU—No More Ivory Tower

New York City

■ Scott Sherman's "Bitter Winter at NYU" [Jan. 9/16] is not only poor reporting, it is so one-sided as to be irresponsible. He paints New York University president John Sexton as the bad guy in ad hominem terms. With few exceptions, he quotes only those who support the strike and ignores important aspects of NYU's November 28 statement on the strike. Sherman cites union estimates that from 150 to 200 graduate assistants are on strike but fails to mention that that is only about 10 percent of such students.

Sherman ignores the fact that the long missive he describes by quoting a local newspaper's anti-NYU editorial as a "frighteningly blunt ultimatum" actually told striking graduate students that they would retain both their scholarships and their health coverage. It also indicated that those who refused to return to their teaching duties would not receive stipends for the spring semester. The stipends are $18,000 per year. I am not aware of any persons on strike who expect to continue receiving their salaries while they walk the picket lines. The strike is disrupting NYU, and it is doing great harm to students, who are not being taught, or tutored, or counseled by those who are on strike.

Sherman suggests that NYU backed out on the union agreement when the NLRB changed an earlier decision that graduate students were employees and entitled to organize. He ignores easily obtainable information that NYU's decision not to agree to a new contract was based on continuing union violations of the provisions of the 2001 collective bargaining agreement providing that "decisions regarding who is taught, what is taught, how it is taught and who does the teaching involves academic judgment and shall be made at the sole discretion of the University." UAW brought a series of grievances to arbitration that flew in the face of its commitment. They lost all these challenges, but each diverted time and attention away from other matters and, according to university officials, severely undermined confidence in the union's noninterference commitment.

Nation readers, including this subscriber, are mainly pro-union and might well side with the graduate student strike after hearing all the facts. The Sherman article denied them these facts, thereby doing a disservice to *Nation* readers and to this publication. DERRICK BELL

Visiting professor, NYU Law School

Newark, Dela.

■ As the voice of the higher education profession and leading advocate for the highest academic standards, the American Association of University Professors deplores the actions of the NYU administration in severing bargaining relations with its graduate student union and threatening draconian punishments for those graduate employees who remain on strike.

The administration claims that its decision was based in part on the premise that allowing teaching assistants to have bargaining rights jeopardizes the traditional roles of professor and student, because the TAs will be placed in an adversarial relationship with their faculty mentors. However, a clear majority of NYU faculty supports the TAs. The NYU chapter of AAUP has organized an initiative called Faculty Democracy to oppose the administration's action. More than 200 faculty members are active participants in that effort and have declared their support for the graduate student employees' decision to strike. It is both disingenuous and risible to assert that the mentoring relationship is harmed by good faith negotiations about salaries, benefits and access to fair grievance procedures.

It would appear that the decision to sever ties with the union was motivated by a cynical desire to exploit the graduate teaching assistants. GAs lecture, grade papers and monitor examinations—in other words, they perform the teaching duties of a professor. They may join AAUP with full voting rights and the right to hold office at every level of the organization. The AAUP's "Statement on Graduate Students" asserts, in part, that "graduate student assistants, like other campus employees, should have the right to organize to bargain collectively" and "must not suffer retaliation from professors or administrators because of their activity relating to collective bargaining."

We condemn the retaliatory actions taken by the NYU administration against the strikers, which have had a chilling effect on the academic climate. We will continue to support the GAs in their efforts. JANE BUCK

President, American Association of University Professors

New York City

■ According to the recently formed adjunct union, some 75 percent of classes at NYU are taught by adjuncts and graduate students, to reduce personnel costs. During the contract with the union, the number of fully funded graduate assistant positions fell from 1,300 to around 1,000, according to GSOC/UAW Local 2110. When the administration complains that Local 2110 interfered with "academic decision making," it was referring to union grievances about the administration's employing more adjuncts. In one case graduate students from Columbia University, rather than NYU, were hired. What NYU calls the "enterprise university" actually means outsourcing education to the lowest bidder. NICHOLAS MIRZOEFF

Professor, New York University

New York City

■ We appreciate Scott Sherman's reporting on the GA strike. "Bitter Winter at NYU" indeed: Graduate assistants walk the frigid picket lines to insist on their democratic right to union representation while the administration, led by a president appointed without customary search procedures, issues unprecedented threats of reprisal against some of the university's most promising young scholars. The faculty, meanwhile, awakened to its own marginalization in the decision-making processes, attempts to organize itself around core principles of democratic governance. Our students, in their fight to retain the union they won in 2000 through legitimate democratic elections, have exposed this administration's flagrant disregard for academic freedom and shared governance of the university.

A dispassionate examination of the record would indicate that it is not the union, in its four years of existence, that has encroached on academic freedom. It is the president, the provost and the University Leadership Team—whose unionbusting actions have included electronic eavesdropping on courses and unilaterally stripping departments of effective control over course staffing and even over grading procedures—who have been the real enemies of academic freedom. The university as a community that attempts to put into practice the lofty democratic ideals taught in its classrooms has been sadly transformed, not by the union or the graduate assistants but by the administration, which from the very beginning eschewed democratic procedures and proceeded down the road of unilateralism. The fractured situation at NYU is actually worse than Sherman imagines. The administration should negotiate with the union immediately. REBECCA KARL

On behalf of 26 NYU faculty

New York City

■ It isn't surprising that NYU's administration wants to make decisions without having to bargain with a union. What *is* surprising is the extent to which NYU administrators, many of whom are scholars and professed liberals, are willing to compromise their intellectual integrity in support of their goal.

(Continued on Page 22)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **EXCHANGE**

NYU—NO MORE IVORY TOWER
Derrick Bell, Jane Buck, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Rebecca Karl et al., Daniel J. Ratner & Carl J. Levine, Larry Cohen, Michael Palm, Kate Bronfenbrenner, Scott Sherman

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 MADNESS OF KING GEORGE

4 STORM CLOUDS OVER IRAN
Richard Falk

5 TRUTH, FICTION AND FREY
Matthew Flamm

6 UCLA'S DIRTY THIRTY
Jon Wiener

24 IN FACT...

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
On Roy Blunt's Promise...
Calvin Trillin

8 BEAT THE DEVIL
Nick Kristof's Brothel Problem
Alexander Cockburn

9 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Prochoice Puritans
Katha Pollitt

10 BENEATH THE RADAR
What's Race Got to Do With It?
Gary Younge

ARTICLES

11 NEW FACE OF THE CAMPUS LEFT
Is pragmatism trumping principle in the new student movement?
Sam Graham-Felsen

18 THE PARTY OF DAVOS
The global ruling class depends on US power—which is slipping into crisis.
Jeff Faux

BOOKS & THE ARTS

25 HILL AND SIMEONE: Messiaen
David Schiff

29 DARÍO: Rubén Darío: Selected Writings
Roberto Gonzáles Echevarría

34 FILMS
Why We Fight
Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World
Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story
Stuart Klawans

Cover by Gene Case & Stephen Kling/ Avenging Angels; illustrations by R.O. Blechman and Tim Lane

EDITORIALS

Madness of King George

Led by White House propaganda czar Karl Rove, the Bush Administration has launched an aggressive campaign claiming that the President's authorization of massive ongoing electronic surveillance of American citizens is the only appropriate response to "a ruthless enemy." Rove added that criticism of the President's policy comes from those who don't understand "the nature of the threat and the gravity of the moment."

The Founding Fathers anticipated debates such as the one stemming from George W. Bush's illegal spying. Well acquainted with the excesses of mad monarchs named George and the excuses for tyranny peddled by their partisans, Benjamin Franklin warned, "They that can give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." James Madison understood how seductive the claims of national security could be, pointing out that wartime is "the true nurse of executive aggrandizement."

Contemporary experts as diverse as Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University and one of the foremost scholars of the conflict between the demands of national security and the Constitution, and Bruce Fein, a key player in Ronald Reagan's Justice Department, have identified the Bush Administration's wiretapping as a dangerous assault on our basic freedoms. Turley says, "What the President ordered in this case was a crime." Fein adds that Bush is claiming "more power than King George III had at the time of the Revolution, in asserting the theory that anything the President thinks is helpful to fighting the war against terrorism he can do."

So far, few prominent Democrats have had the courage to echo these legal scholars, and what is supposed to be the party of opposition has struggled to mount a coherent challenge to the Administration's abuses. Former Vice President Al Gore's January 16 address at Constitution Hall in Washington—where he declared that "the American values we hold most dear have been placed at serious risk by the unprecedented claims of the Administration to a truly breathtaking expansion of executive power"—was an exception. Gore called for Congress to take up its constitutionally mandated responsibility to serve as a check on the executive branch. That is, of course, easier said than done, both because of recalcitrance on the part of Republican leaders and reluctance on the part of many Democrats. When Representative John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, took up Gore's call, he was denied an official venue. When Conyers pressed ahead with unofficial hearings in the Capitol basement, at which both Turley and Fein testified, only a half-dozen House Democrats showed up.

We should not allow ourselves to fall into Rove's trap and let this become a partisan squabble over national security. If we do, the President and his cronies on Capitol Hill are going to win. This is not fundamentally a debate about wiretapping or national security. It is about whether Presidents must obey the law, one of the bedrock principles of a free nation. As Elizabeth Holtzman recently observed in these pages, "A President, any President, who maintains that he is above the law—and repeatedly violates the law—thereby commits high crimes and misdemeanors." Bush purposely violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, disregarding clear and specific statutory language and the Constitution. If he is not called to account for this grave illegality, the democratic standards to which this and future Presidents are held will have been dramatically lowered, and essential avenues for defending our liberties will have been blocked in precisely the manner that Ben Franklin, James Madison and the other wise Founders feared.

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Storm Clouds Over Iran

A dangerous escalation of tensions in the Middle East could produce a devastating new war there if diplomatic steps are not taken to head it off. The United States and Israel, with the cooperation of some European countries, have been stoking a climate of fear to justify a military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. At the very least, they seem determined to refer the matter of Iran's nuclear program to the United Nations Security Council as a step toward imposing sanctions.

There has been a tsunami of dramatic public statements by prominent leaders. Vice President Cheney has been darkly hinting for months that a military attack may be in the offing, either by Israel or the United States. In January Jacques Chirac made a highly irresponsible statement that France might resort to nuclear weapons to retaliate for acts of state-sponsored terrorism, a posture that could only persuade Iran to deter such nuclear trash-talk by attempting to get the bomb. On January 22 Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told a Jerusalem audience that "Israel will not be able to accept an Iranian nuclear capability, and it must have the capability to defend itself with all that this implies, and we are preparing." This thinly veiled threat recalls Israel's 1981 airstrike that destroyed the Osirak reactor in Iraq, then the core of the Iraqi program. International reactions to that attack were not very damaging to Israel and there were no serious regional repercussions—factors that could encourage Israel, either alone or via the United States, to consider a strike on Iran.

Iran's recent actions lend the attack scenario added plausibility. In January it ordered the removal of the International Atomic Energy Agency's seals on its uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, an indication that Tehran will proceed with its nuclear energy program in such a way as to retain the possibility of developing weapons. Reassurances of purely peaceful intentions regarding nuclear energy have never been reliable. Israel, India and Pakistan all repeatedly made the same promises before they developed nuclear weapons. Israel has never officially acknowledged its nuclear capability and has never been called to international account, although it is generally understood to have an arsenal of somewhere between 100 and 200 nuclear warheads, along with advanced delivery systems capable of targeting any country in the Middle East, including Iran. In such circumstances, it should not surprise us that Iranian leaders may be considering acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.

The atmosphere has been further inflamed by the outrageous fulminations of Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Such hostility would agitate the security concerns of any state, especially one that has faced threats throughout its history, as has Israel. Both Israel and the United States have claimed preemptive rights when it comes to the pursuit of their strategic interests. Israel initiated pre-emptive wars against its Arab neighbors in 1956 (with Britain and France), 1967 and 1982, and has frequently struck across its borders to destroy or punish adversaries. So when Ahmadinejad insists that the Holocaust is a "myth," and that Israel should be "wiped off the map" or perhaps relocated to

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COMMENT

Europe, he almost seems to be taunting Israel to respond militarily, certainly a reckless gambit.

And then there is the American dimension. The United States, bogged down ever more hopelessly in Iraq, seems to welcome a showdown with Iran as an opportunity for diversionary diplomacy. Iran, as an original member of the "axis of evil," was always in the cross hairs of neoconservative grand strategy for the region, and rather than be daunted by failure in Iraq, Administration hard-liners are clearly tempted to shift attention to Iran.

Despite these worrisome concerns, there are many reasons to counteract this drift toward more violence in the Middle East.

§ First, the Iranian threat is remote; according to most predictions, should Tehran decide to go nuclear, it would not have weapons before 2008 at the earliest.

§ Second, the United States, and even Israel, will continue to have such overwhelming military superiority as to dissuade Iran from aggressive action unless its leaders are ready to commit national suicide.

§ Third, unlike Iraq in 1981, Iran's multiple nuclear facilities are geographically dispersed and much better defended, with many of them located in underground bunkers, making their destruction, especially by Israel acting alone, far more difficult.

§ Fourth, Iran has the means to launch a devastating retaliation with conventional weapons, including its Shahab-3 missiles, which can reach targets in Israel with reasonable accuracy. And Iran has other military options, including intervention on the Shiite side in Iraq, which could turn the disastrous US occupation there into a worse nightmare, with skyrocketing casualties. Iran could also vastly increase its support to Islamist resistance forces in the Palestinian territories and to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

§ Fifth, as the world's fourth-largest oil producer, Iran could plunge the world into an immediate deep recession by embargoing its oil if it is attacked, or if an attack appears imminent.

§ Sixth, an Israeli or US attack on Iran would almost certainly strengthen Islamist tendencies throughout the region as well as put intense pressure on Arab governments to react much more strongly against the United States and Israel. And heightened threats against Iran would only strengthen the hard-liners there. By all accounts, Iranians—even those who detest the mullahs—overwhelmingly support their country's nuclear ambitions.

We can assume that Israel, at least, is well aware of these problems, which suggests that its policy is not so much to foment an immediate attack as to foster increased US hostility toward Iran. With Washington we can't be so sure. After all, one of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's notorious rules for policy-makers is that if a problem (in this case, Iraq) proves insoluble, one should enlarge it. If so, Israel may be able to push Washington to take the lead in confronting Iran. In this vein, Israel seems to be using its remarkable influence in Congress and with the Bush Administration to encourage a harder line. Hillary Clinton and other leading Democrats seem to be playing along, openly criticizing the Administration for not exerting enough pressure on Tehran.

The uncertainties are great. Saber-rattling on all sides could set off a chain reaction culminating in a truly intercivilizational war. There is no Iranian threat that justifies consideration of such a conflict. To initiate war under these conditions would further weaken both the UN and international law, which have already been badly damaged by the unilateral, unprovoked invasion and occupation of Iraq.

There are also wider issues at stake. Should the Middle East, or for that matter the world, regard as normal a system of nuclear apartheid—in which a select group of nations are entitled to such weapons while others seeking to acquire them are treated as "rogue states"? What these multiple incendiary trends suggest, above all, is the practical wisdom of seeking multilateral nuclear disarmament—the only course that has any prospect of halting proliferation. So long as sovereign states are the main actors and conflict among them persists, it is disastrous folly to suppose that some will agree to live forever beneath a nuclear sword of Damocles without trying to obtain such weapons themselves. The Iran confrontation is best regarded as one more wakeup call for the nuclear weapons states. RICHARD FALK

Richard Falk, a Nation *editorial board member, is one of the co-editors of* Crimes of War: Iraq, *forthcoming from Nation Books.*

Truth, Fiction and Frey

As the Smoking Gun website reported, and as legions of commentators have argued, James Frey, the discredited author of the faux memoir *A Million Little Pieces*, is a liar and a fraud. But he still doesn't deserve to take all the blame for pulling a fast one on the public. His publisher should come in for a few insults too. Venal and foolish would do.

It's no secret that as book publishers struggle to maintain levels of growth even television networks can't achieve, editors increasingly crave titles that come with marketing plans built in. Yes, worthy books get published—quality has a market too—but corporate publishers keep the lights on, or try to, seeking out authors with their own media "platforms" or back stories ready-made for Hollywood and the press.

A Million Little Pieces displays a clumsy beginner's prose style, and its overblown story of addiction and recovery aroused suspicions long before thesmokinggun.com revealed that, contrary to what Frey wrote, the author did not serve time in jail and was never wanted in three states. But Frey wasn't without cunning or foresight. He built the book with an essential piece of marketing bait at its center: It's true! As in any good con, greed made his publisher bite.

Frey's actions should not be confused with those of J T LeRoy, the cult fiction writer who was exposed as a hoaxer at the same cultural moment. A supposed former child prostitute who published his first short story at 16, LeRoy, we recently learned from *New York* magazine, is the creation of a middle-aged writer named Laura Albert. But Albert/LeRoy's years-long imposture was a kind of performance art compared with Frey's desperate and humorless con.

If it's any comfort to Frey or his supporters, he does seem genuinely troubled. A healthy person who flogged his book on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and was caught lying to millions of readers might have wanted to come clean. Instead the con artist

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COMMENT

blamed the mark, telling Larry King that he "initially shopped the book as a novel" but that his publisher, Nan Talese/Doubleday, decided to "publish it as a memoir."

When Frey was promoting *Pieces* three years ago, his saying it was a "novel" meant it transcended the recovery genre. This time, that claim helped cover his tracks: Frey hadn't wanted to exploit his personal history for marketing purposes; that had been his publisher's decision.

It was thus heartening, a week later, to read Nan Talese in the *New York Observer* denying that *Pieces* was ever "once discussed as fiction." The publisher was honorable, or at least she and the acquiring editor, Sean McDonald, were the marks and not the accomplices. But the outsized needs of the industry and its hunger for bigger, faster-selling titles still pose an invitation to enterprising operators to try to pull a fast one again.

Not surprisingly, the feeling in some quarters lately is that Doubleday got what it deserved in being tarred with Frey's brush. A writer I know went so far as to applaud Frey for playing on publishing's soft spot, gaming a system that's "unfair to start with." Even Oprah, the best friend of the industry, took out her embarrassment on Doubleday, sniping that it was the publisher's job, not hers, to figure out which category a book belonged in. (Never mind that counselors from Hazelden, the rehabilitation center where the book is set, warned her producers that Frey's descriptions of treatment couldn't be true.)

But publishing shouldn't shoulder all the blame either. In focusing on publicity-friendly books, houses are just doing what they have to in order to get attention. "The media needs nonfiction handles," notes an editor at a major publisher. "Otherwise they'll cover Paris Hilton's book."

At the same time, publishing might do a better job protecting itself from itself if it fact-checked more often. But that's not a lecture it wants to hear right now from the press, most of which doesn't use fact-checkers either. Besides, the feeling among some editors who passed on *Pieces* was that fact-checking was beside the point; nothing in the book rang true.

"Our authors are not unknowns; we believe them," says Simon & Schuster publisher David Rosenthal, explaining why the industry has no plans to start fact-checking. "You do need to look someone in the eye and ask questions. If the anecdote seems too good to be true, it likely is." MATTHEW FLAMM

Matthew Flamm is a senior reporter with Crain's New York Business.

CALVIN TRILLIN

On Roy Blunt's Promise To Reform Lobbying Rules If He Becomes House Majority Leader

I must be blunt where Blunt's concerned:
In service to DeLay he earned
His K Street Brownie points with clusters
For calling lobbyists to musters
Where bills were molded to a tee
By K Street and the GOP.
Yes, money poured from K Street tills
So lobbyists could write these bills.
Reformer's what they call this guy?
Then I'm the Sultan of Brunei.

UCLA's Dirty Thirty

A right-wing alumni group at UCLA recently came up with a tactic that even Joe McCarthy and HUAC never tried: paying students to rat on their professors. The Bruin Alumni Association offered students up to $100 for tapes of lectures that show how "radicals" on the faculty are "actively proselytizing their extreme views in the classroom." The group has posted a list of thirty professors—the Dirty Thirty—on its website as its first targets.

Other groups have sought to monitor American campuses for evidence of professors' political bias, but they used "volunteers" rather than offering to pay students—most notably the David Project's campaign against Columbia's Middle East Studies program [see Scott Sherman, "The Mideast Comes to Columbia," April 4, 2005] and the Middle East Forum's so-called Campus Watch. David Horowitz and his Students for Academic Freedom have been running a national campaign to get state legislatures to pass laws to correct "liberal bias" among the faculty. In the name of advancing intellectual diversity, Horowitz and his allies seek to impose external political control over central educational functions like curriculums, hiring and firing, and teaching methods. It's hard to imagine a more profound threat to academic freedom and the independence of American universities. Horowitz & Co. had such a bill introduced in the California legislature last year, but it died in committee. Their big problem: They lack concrete evidence that professors are abusing their authority in classrooms and discriminating against conservative and Christian students. That's where the Bruin Alumni Association comes in.

But what is the Bruin Alumni Association? It appears to be a single person: Andrew Jones, a 2003 UCLA grad who headed the campus Bruin Republicans. He made news for running an affirmative action bake sale, in which he charged white male students more for cookies than minorities and women. Jones worked for Horowitz, but according to the *New York Times*, Horowitz says he fired him because Jones pressured students to "file false reports that they had been physically attacked by leftists." (Neither Jones nor Horowitz replied to e-mailed questions.)

Jones's website features lengthy reports on each of the thirty professors he's targeted, but they contain virtually nothing about misconduct in the classroom. The charges against the faculty in-

(Continued on Page 24)

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"Mexico is Becoming the Next Colombia"

By Ted Galen Carpenter of the CATO Institute

Executive Summary

Mexico is a major source of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine for the U.S. market as well as the principal transit and distribution point for cocaine coming in from South America. For years, people both inside and outside Mexico have worried that the country might descend into the maelstrom of corruption and violence that has long plagued the chief drug-source country in the Western Hemisphere, Colombia. There are growing signs that the "Colombianization" of Mexico is now becoming a reality.

That tragic prospect is a direct result of Washington's policy of drug prohibition. A prohibitionist strategy inherently creates a huge black-market premium for trafficking in illegal drugs. The enormous potential profit also attracts the most violence-prone criminal elements. It is a truism that when drugs are outlawed, only outlaws will traffic in drugs.

If Mexico goes down the same path as Colombia, the consequences for the United States will be much more severe. Colombia is relatively far away, but Mexico shares a border with the United States and is closely linked to this country through the North America Free Trade Agreement. Chaos in Mexico is already spilling over the border and will adversely impact the United States – especially the southwestern states.

There is still time for Mexico to halt and eventually reverse the Colombianization process, but for that to occur Washington must make dramatic policy changes. For more than three and a half decades, the United States has pursued a vigorous war on drugs that has produced major social pathologies both here and abroad. It is time to rethink the entire prohibitionist strategy.

(Continued at: http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb87.pdf)

Common Sense for Drug Policy
H. Michael Gray, Chair; Robert E. Field, Co-Chair
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Nick Kristof's Brothel Problem

I'd gotten so used to Nicholas Kristof's January visits to prostitutes in Cambodia that it was something of a shock to find him this January in Calcutta's red-light district instead.

As readers of his *New York Times* columns in the past few years will know, around this time—a smart choice, weatherwise—Kristof heads to Southeast Asia to write about the scourge of child prostitution. One can hardly fault him for that, even though Kristof's bluff busybody prose is irksome, as he takes his pet peeve out for an annual saunter, the way A.M. Rosenthal did for years with female circumcision in Africa.

So far as I know, Rosenthal never actually bought a young African woman to save her from circumcision. Maybe they aren't for sale. In 2004 Kristof did buy two young Cambodian women—Srey Neth for $150 and Srey Mom for $203—to get them out of brothels in Poipet. There was something very nineteenth-century about the whole thing, both in moral endeavor and journalistic boosterism. In January 2005 Kristof was back in Cambodia to report that while Srey Neth was doing well, Srey Mom was back in the brothel, probably because she needed the drugs. Even in 2004 some of us had our doubts, since Srey Mom wouldn't leave the brothel until Kristof sprang not only for the $203 but also for extra cash for her cell phone and some jewelry she'd hocked.

I smell an HBO movie in the offing. Already in the *Times* online I can see pictures of the Cambodian girls and Kristof's videos of himself engaged in good works.

I clicked on "prostitution" at the foot of a Kristof column and found myself looking at a cheery promo piece published in the *Times* in early January about a brothel for women customers that Heidi Fleiss is planning to build in Nevada. Maybe there'll be rooms with teenage boys to slake the appetites of all those schoolteachers who seduce their students. Then Kristof can schedule a buyout for them too, perhaps in January 2007, if Heidi gets her license from the State of Nevada by then. She told the *Times* reporter she'd already sold the rights to HBO.

This January Kristof's been in India. On January 22 from Calcutta's red-light district came his interview with Geeta, kidnapped with all sorts of exciting trimmings for *Times* readers ("Then the aunt locked her in a soundproof room in a brothel with an Arab man who bought her virginity"). On January 24 he issued another column from Calcutta about how to battle sex trafficking, with suggestions for fiercer policing, campaigns against the sales of virgins, inspection of brothels for prisoners and so on, and a suggestion that Bush, on his impending visit to India, lead "dignitaries and TV cameras through a red-light slum and down a fetid alley to the sewer-side offices of New Light. The entourage could then spotlight reformers like Ms. Basu...."

India hoists the Western pundit's inanity to matchless levels. As Vijay Prashad, a columnist for the Indian weekly *Frontline*, wrote to me from Chennai after reading Kristof's column, "Imagine writing a column on the methamphetamine crisis in rural America without any mention of the death of the family farm."

India has endured more than a decade of virtually unimaginable rural torment consequent upon imposition of neoliberal "reforms" editorially endorsed and endlessly hailed by *Times* reporters. With the withdrawal of subsidies, and the collapse of farm credit and markets, there is a gigantic rural crisis affecting millions of families. As the *Hindu* newspaper's great chronicler of these rural catastrophes, P. Sainath (with whom I traveled round India last year), wrote to me this week, "Take Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh, which saw the maximum numbers of farm suicides for any district in India (over 3,000 during the years of the *NYT*'s poster boy of the reforms, Chandrababu Naidu). Every single NGO and social organisation dealing with women's issues worried about how bad was the rise of prostitution as the agrarian crisis bit deeper and deeper.

"If you drove from Anantapur in Andhra to India's 'Silicon Valley' in Bangalore in the neighbouring state of Karnataka, as I often did and do, you could see dozens of women hanging about the highway waiting for pick-ups, mostly truck drivers. This was simply not seen on those roads ten to twelve years ago."

This border area, Sainath says, is also the victim of WTO-related policies that have killed its silk-making sector. At the very same time, other neoliberal policies destroyed hundreds of industrial units in Anantapur. The pressures resulting from such policies have systematically pushed women from desperate families into prostitution. "Women and young girls," Sainath continues, "are without a doubt the worst victims of the agrarian crisis, particularly women with landless labor, or small farm and lower-caste backgrounds. The last ten years have been a nightmare for so many of them. Wherever I go in rural India, every activist I ever speak to almost inevitably brings up the subject of trafficking. They're all worried about the rise in debt-related or bonded prostitution."

Recently Brinda Karat, member of Parliament and leader of the largest women's organization in the country, the All India Democratic Women's Association, publicly declared that "there is a huge increase in prostitution and trafficking of women and children around the country. Violence against women has also increased."

A very conservative Food and Agriculture Organization estimate indicates that India contributed nearly two-thirds of the new hungry added to the ranks of the already hungry between 1995–97 and 2000–02. Destitution engenders prostitution.

If Kristof wants to confront the prime promoter of prostitution in India and many other countries besides, he doesn't have to leave the East Coast of the United States. He can take his video camera into the World Bank and confront its current president, Paul Wolfowitz. Of course, it's not as dramatic as buying Cambodian girls, or as colorful as retailing Geeta's ravishing by the Arab. ■

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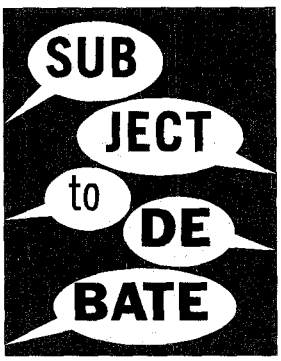
KATHA POLLITT

Prochoice Puritans



Do you think abortion is tragic and terrible and wrong, that *Roe v. Wade* went too far and that the prochoice movement is elitist, unfeeling, overbearing, overreaching and quite possibly dead? In the current debate over abortion, that makes you a prochoicer. As the nation passes the thirty-third anniversary of *Roe*, it is hard to find anyone who will say a good word in public for abortion rights, let alone for abortion itself. Abortion has become a bit like flag-burning—something that offends all right-thinking people but needs to be legal for reasons of abstract principle ("choice"). Unwanted pregnancy has become like, I don't know, smoking crack: the mark of a weak, undisciplined person of the lower orders.

On the *New York Times* op-ed page, William Saletan argues that prochoicers should concede that "abortion is bad, and the ideal number of abortions is zero," and calls for "an explicit pro-choice war on the abortion rate." Sounding a "clear anti-abortion message," prochoicers should promote a basket of "solutions" to unintended pregnancy: the Prevention First Act, which calls for federal funding for family planning programs; expanded access to health insurance and emergency contraception; comprehensive sex education. "Some pro-choice activists" are even "pushing for more contraceptive diligence in the abortion counseling process, especially on the part of those women who come back for a second abortion." Give those sluts the lecture they deserve.

Saletan is a very shrewd analyst of political framing. Indeed, plenty of Democrats have already picked up the "I hate abortion" mantra. I seem always to be reading calls from prochoicers to antichoicers to work together on contraception. Calling their bluff sounds so clever. Why isn't it working?

The problem is, although of course many abortion opponents support birth control, the organized antichoice movement hates it. To the movement, the most effective birth control methods—the Pill, emergency contraception, the IUD—are "abortifacients" and "mini-abortions," and even barrier methods like the condom promote a "contraceptive mentality": a selfish, licentious attitude that leads straight to abortion hell. Wherever antichoicers have political power, they've slashed funds for family-planning clinics, passed laws enabling pharmacists to deny women EC and the Pill and promoted abstinence-only sex ed that tells kids condoms don't work. In 2003 the Republican-controlled Missouri state legislature handed over the entire state family-planning budget for poor women to "abortion alternatives" centers. Among antichoicers, the political will to mount a significant public-health campaign for contraception, safe sex and accurate information simply does not exist. Democrats for Life of America is pushing "95-10," a plan they claim would reduce abortions by 95 percent in ten years. It doesn't even mention birth control. And that's the liberals!

And there's another problem, too. Inevitably, attacking abortion as a great evil means attacking providers and patients. If abortion is so bad, why not stigmatize the doctors who perform them? Deny the clinic a permit in your town? Make women feel guilty and ashamed for choosing it and make them sweat so they won't screw up again? Ironically, improvements in contraception have made unwanted pregnancy look more like a personal failing. "Why was I so careful? Because I never wanted to have an abortion," wrote 32-year-old Laurie Gigliotti in response to Saletan's op-ed, describing her super-vigilant approach to safe sex. You can just see how unwanted pregnancy will join obesity and smoking as unacceptable behavior in polite society. But how is all this censoriousness supposed to help women control their fertility? If half of all pregnancies are unplanned, it doesn't make sense to treat them as individual sins.

Fact is, there will never be zero abortions. Half the women who abort are using birth control already—there are no perfect methods or perfect people, except maybe Laurie Gigliotti. Even in small, tidy, prosperous Sweden and the Netherlands, there are abortions. So how can there be zero abortions in America, with our ramshackle healthcare system, our millions of poor people, our high school graduates who can't even read a prescription information sheet?

The trouble with thinking in terms of zero abortions is that you make abortion so hateful you do the antichoicers' work for them. You accept that the zygote/embryo/fetus has some kind of claim to be born. You start making madonna-whore distinctions. In the *New York Times Magazine* Eyal Press, a contributing writer to this magazine, writes of his father, a heroically brave and dedicated abortion doctor: "Had the women...been free-love advocates for whom the procedure seemed a mere matter of convenience, he would not have been so angry" at the antichoice protesters who hounded him and his patients. Why not? Because a sexy single woman should suffer for not suffering? Nobody's proposing the walk of shame for men who don't or won't use condoms, or stern lectures for them in the clinic waiting room either.

In 1989 a number of polls asked respondents whether abortion should be legal or not depending on the reason for seeking it. After life/health, rape/incest and fetal deformity, majorities of Americans disapproved of every reason on the list: can't afford a child (40 percent approval), too many children (40 percent), emotional strain (35 percent), to finish school (28 percent), not married (25 percent). Assuming opinion hasn't drastically changed, most Americans think women should be denied abortions for the reasons the vast majority of procedures are performed. They think women should carry unwanted children to term, even if they can't support them, have no partner, have to drop out of school, shortchange their other children or can't cope emotionally. Now, maybe those respondents don't really want abortion to be illegal so much as they want to express their disapproval.

Either way, these answers don't suggest to me that injecting more antiabortion moralism into the debate will help keep abortion legal and accessible. I'd say it is too moralistic already. ■

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GARY YOUNGE

What's Race Got to Do With It?

To get from downtown Atlanta to the First Iconium Baptist Church, take Ralph David Abernathy freeway and follow the signs to the Confederate complex. Outside the church a welcome board states: "If you are headed in the wrong direction God allows U-turns."

Inside at a black church summit on gay rights organized by the National Black Justice Coalition, the Rev. Al Sharpton is trying to persuade black churches to rethink the path some have taken on gay rights.

Sharpton believes homophobia provided the Republican Party with the key to many a vestry door. In the last presidential election, the GOP boosted its share of the black vote to 11 percent, the postwar average, up from 8 percent in 2000, the lowest level in nearly four decades. (Following Hurricane Katrina it slumped to just 2 percent.) "The majority of the votes that Bush got in the African-American community was from his homophobic appeal," says Sharpton, who went on to invoke the spirit of Bayard Rustin, the gay black organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. Republicans "couldn't come to black churches to talk about the war, about healthcare, about education, about poverty. So they did what they always do and reached for bigotry against gay and lesbian people."

At first glance this strategy seems to have paid off. In early January a black minister, Herbert Lusk II, hosted a huge rally supporting the Supreme Court nomination of Samuel Alito—attended by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Focus on the Family's James Dobson—at the Greater Exodus Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, where he is the pastor. The event laid bare the tensions between the black church and the broader progressive movement. As one of the few autonomous institutions allowed under segregation and slavery, the church has long been the principal tool for political advancement in black America. Throughout, even as its influence has diminished, it has continued to play an ambivalent yet decisive role in liberation struggles—a socially conservative institution leading a community whose fight for equality necessitates radical change. This problem is not new—the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. eventually had to leave the National Baptist Convention because of its reluctance to support the civil rights movement. But on issues like gay rights the contradictions are particularly acute and ripe for exploitation by the Christian right.

In 2004 Republicans did particularly well in key swing states, including Ohio, where voters approved a same-sex-marriage ban and where the GOP's share of the black vote went up from 9 percent, in 2000, to 16 percent.

Whether homophobia in the black churches fueled these increases is debatable. Glen Ford, editor and co-publisher of blackcommentator.com, a left-wing webzine, says it was irrelevant. "The Bush regime poured tens of millions of dollars into the preachers who were pliable and amenable to Republican subversion," he says. "Homophobia didn't have a thing to do with it." Sharpton argues it was pivotal. "I'm not dreaming this...[gay marriage] became the predominant issue in the 2004 election. It re-elected George Bush."

Both protest too much. There is little evidence of a direct causal link. The Republicans' share of the black vote halved in Arkansas, which had a gay marriage amendment on the ballot, but more than doubled in Pennsylvania—which did not. Nonetheless, there is no reason to believe that blacks were any less vulnerable than whites to the homophobic virus spread by the Republicans.

Indeed, they may have been more so. Polling by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) reveals that African-Americans are significantly less likely to support gay marriage and same-sex civil unions than whites. There is no point being in denial about this (Ford says he does not believe "white bourgeois polls"). If black people's views can differ from whites substantially on the war and Hurricane Katrina, why should sexual orientation be any different?

There is nothing essentially progressive in the black American condition. The civil rights movement was riddled with internal prejudices. Shortly before his death CORE leader James Farmer told me that he excluded gays from the Freedom Rides. "We had to screen them carefully," he said, "because we knew that if they found anything to throw at us, they would throw it."

But likewise, there is no point in fetishizing black homophobia, for there is nothing essentially antigay about black Americans either. Whatever African-Americans think about gay rights, the fact is they don't think about it very much. Of the thousands of black people interviewed by David Bositis, an analyst at the JCPES, not one has volunteered it as a priority. Other surveys show blacks are more likely than whites to support antidiscrimination laws that protect gays and lesbians. Indeed, according to the Human Rights Campaign score card, black legislators have done a better job of defending gay rights than white Democrats. In other words, when black people have the power to protect gay rights in law, they are more likely to use it than other racial groups.

Despite these facts many white liberals are peculiarly invested in the notion that African-Americans are backward on all social issues except race. What this assumption is based on other than an innate sense of superiority is not clear. What is obvious is that it will have to be confronted before any progressive coalition capable of mounting an effective challenge to the right can be built.

For while there is no axiomatic link between racism and homophobia, there are nevertheless connections that can and should be made about how to fight them. The civil rights movement was not only about the interests of African-Americans. Nor was it cut from whole cloth. It was part of a narrative of extending human rights to those who had been denied them, not least white women and Jews. It drew inspiration from Gandhi (among others) and can provide inspiration to yet more. Its roots, like its appeal, were universal.

There is no need for anything as drastic as a U-turn. We just have to consult the original map. ■

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When a group called Campus Progress launched its effort to promote progressive values on college campuses in the fall of 2004, *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz wondered: "Isn't that a bit like pumping sand into the Mojave Desert?"

The assumption that America's campuses are impenetrable bastions of liberalism—where left-leaning faculty predominate, progressive student activism flourishes and conservatism is fiercely marginalized—still rules the day. But in reality, since the 1970s the conservative movement has become the dominant political force on many American campuses. This sea change is not simply a reflection of some students' increasingly right-wing views. Each year, conservative groups pour more than $35 million into hundreds of college campuses. They pay for right-wing speakers, underwrite scores of student papers, provide free leadership training and cushy internships, and equip thousands of new activists with talking points, discipline and missionary zeal.

Today's campus right is unified, on-message and passionate—in other words, part of a genuine movement. By contrast, the campus left is disparate, undisciplined and segmented along ideological and issue-based lines. Student progressives have struggled for decades with not only a lack of cohesion but a dearth of resources. "We didn't have our act together," says Joshua Holland, a fair-trade and antiwar activist who graduated from the University of Southern California this past spring. "We tried to keep things nonhierarchical and loosely structured, but at the end of the day, there was a lot of running around in circles, and we weren't getting anything done."

It's a familiar lament among the two dozen student progressives I talked with for this article. But help has arrived. After three decades of unanswered advances by the right, the progressive movement is no longer leaving students to fend for themselves. Campus Progress—a project of the Center for American Progress (CAP), one of the country's premier think tanks—is the largest of a handful of organizations that have emerged in the past year to counter the right's campus operations. These groups are offering resources, ideas and training designed to patch up many of the holes that have long deflated the student left. But in attempting to forge a widespread student progressive movement, they face many of the same quandaries that loom large for American progressivism as a whole: What values should define the movement? What tactics should be embraced? And perhaps most difficult of all, to what extent does striving for results mean sacrificing strong principles?

Ever since the heyday of left-wing campus activism in the late 1960s and early '70s, progressive students have struggled with looking frivolous, reactionary or cliched to their peers. At the University of North Carolina senior Jessica Polk says students have long been "sick of what the left is doing—they want to walk to class without being handed a flier about a rally or vigil."

Meanwhile, student conservatives have managed to balance organizational and ideological discipline with ragtag rebelliousness, positioning themselves as perpetual underdogs on oppressively liberal campuses. Armed with their version of a screw-the-man mentality, the student right's activism is often shocking: affirmative action bake sales where white students are charged more for cookies than blacks, for instance, or immigrant hunts

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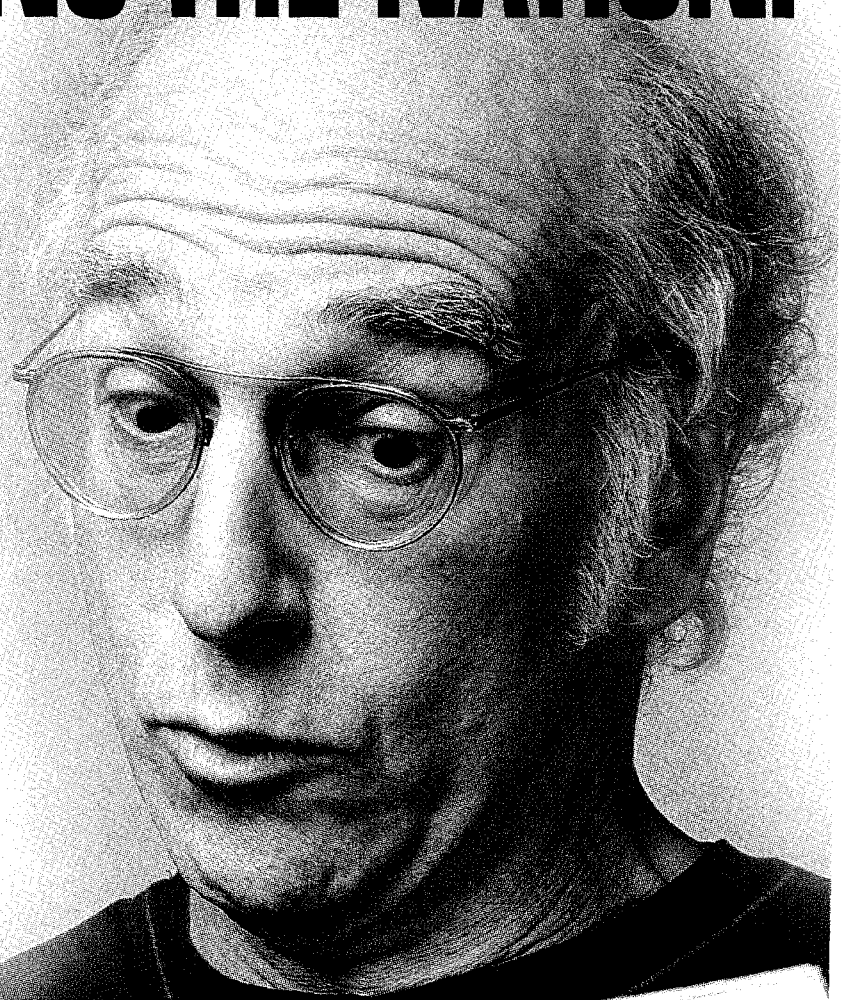

THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")

Larry David is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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where students dressed in Border Patrol uniforms chase targeted "illegals" with water guns. As tasteless and offensive as such stunts might be, they make waves on campuses and garner national attention for the movement.

"This is the *South Park* generation," says Matt Singer, a junior at the University of Montana and creator of the popular right-wing blog Left in the West. "The conservative activism is fun, and it rings with the students in the same way that the left did in the '60s and early '70s."

"The right actually ends up looking cooler than the left," agrees Mani Mostofi, who recently earned his master's degree at the University of Texas. "I don't know how this is possible, but it's true!"

For progressive student activists, attention-getting victories have also been scarce. There have been isolated triumphs in the past year: successful student-led living-wage campaigns for employees at Georgetown University and Washington University of St. Louis, and the multi-campus Taco Bell boycott, which helped secure a significant raise for the fast-food chain's tomato pickers.

'The right actually ends up looking cooler than the left. I don't know how this is possible, but it's true!'

The most widespread disappointment has been the failure to generate a sustainable movement opposing the war in Iraq. While student mobilization in the run-up to the war was massive in scope and energy, the typical problems plaguing the campus left—ideological splits and lack of organization—have caused the movement to fade considerably. "It was really a lost cause," says Yale University junior Jared Malsin, "because there was a great deal of infighting among different factions in the movement." Some student progressives wanted to focus on the fight to keep military recruiters off campus; others were divided over whether to call for immediate withdrawal of US troops. Plus, says Malsin, "there was waning interest in fighting it because it seemed like there was so little we could actually do as students."

Frustrations abound, but the emergence of national progressive organizations on campus has given many student activists renewed hope. In its first year Campus Progress has provided progressive students with tools they've never had before: money and a sense of unity. While its $1.25 million projected budget falls well below the more than $10 million of the right-wing Young America's Foundation, Campus Progress has made an immediate impact. Wayne Huang, editor of Cornell's student progressive publication, *Turn Left*, has seen his paper "go through a shocking transformation in little under a year," thanks to funding from Campus Progress. On twenty-seven other campuses, formerly cash-strapped student left publications are finally competing with conservative papers, publishing regularly and printing on high-quality paper. At its virtual meeting place, CampusProgress.org, students from across the country are sharing ideas and getting advice on how to communicate their values from the likes of Senator Barack Obama. Features like "Know Your Right-Wing Speakers" and "Crib Sheet" provide concise talking points for fighting the right.

For the first time Campus Progress has given progressive students a sense that they, like the campus right, are part of a tangible movement. When 600 progressive students convened in Washington, DC, last summer for the first annual Campus Progress National Student Conference, many felt a profound sense of relief. "For so long there's been a disconnect of dialogue between progressives," says University of Kentucky junior Yuriy Bronshteyn. "There's been nothing central to look to." The mere existence of an organizational infrastructure seems miraculous to Bronshteyn, who says, "This is almost like a star that we can all see in the sky every night—it can give us the feeling that we're all fighting the same fight."

As Campus Progress works to build a national community for student progressives, Young People For (YP4) focuses on developing individual leaders. A project of People for the American Way, YP4 mirrors the right's Leadership Institute, which has trained more than 40,000 young conservatives, including movement heavyweights Ralph Reed and Grover Norquist, since its inception in 1979. Providing a leadership pipeline for the left, YP4 has trained 126 students on forty campuses in its first year.

Jenny Parker, a YP4 fellow at Baylor University, wanted to organize a living-wage campaign on her campus—but had no idea how. After YP4 training in January 2005 in media outreach, coalition building and event planning, Parker says, "now we have the most organized campaign I could ever imagine." Especially helpful, she says, was YP4's guidance on framing the message. "Our audience at Baylor is very conservative and was turned off at the announcement of a living-wage campaign," Parker says. "We realized we had to spin our message a bit in order to gain support. We changed our campaign to the 1 John 3 Campaign"—a reference to a biblical passage urging aid for the poor. "Now our campaign is centered on the idea that this is our Christian obligation."

The largest Baptist university in the world has not yet passed a living wage for its workers, but Parker and her fellow activists are making headway with 1 John 3. They convinced the Student Congress to pass a resolution calling for a living wage, and have motivated 600 students to send postcards to the university president supporting the campaign.

Since the national groups have emerged, Joshua Holland, who was a YP4 fellow at USC, says campus progressives "actually get things done, which is a huge relief, because we're so used to not getting things done."

Progressives organized the most widely publicized student protest of 2005, the Princeton Frist-a-Buster. What began as a small event staged by eight students in front of the Frist Campus Center—each student took turns reading out of the campus phone book to protest Senate majority leader Bill Frist's threat to abolish the filibuster for judicial nominees—quickly grew into a nationwide phenomenon. Hundreds of students and professors, a Nobel laureate and two US senators took turns reading everything from Shakespeare to

Sam Graham-Felsen, a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker, contributes to The Nation*'s new blog, The Notion, and co-writes Sweet Victories, now featuring more campus news (both at www.thenation.com).*

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3,500 digits of pi at Princeton, while students at thirty-five other campuses staged copycat events.

"We had a situation where the rhetoric was moderate, it was billed as nonpartisan and the people running it weren't the crazy activists but committed students who knew what they were talking about," says Princeton's Asheesh Kapur Siddique, a core organizer of the 384-hour talk marathon. "We spent hours learning the history, learning the rules, so we could talk authoritatively about it. When our peers asked us what we were doing, it was far more convincing to them."

To David Halperin, director of Campus Progress, the Frist-a-Buster was the perfect model for the kind of movement his group wants to foster—clean, polished, on-message, but also humorous and inventive. The protest wasn't initiated by the national organization, he is quick to note, but by Siddique and his co-organizers. Campus Progress embraced the idea, provided resources and publicity and served, in Halperin's words, as a "megaphone" for the activists. That's how he wants his group to work. Unlike the largely top-town model of right-wing student advocacy groups, Halperin wants Campus Progress to be pushed "by the students' agendas."

Students have long been 'sick of what the left is doing—they want to walk to class without being handed a flier about a rally or vigil.'

But in choosing which student activities to support, which publications to finance and which speakers to bring on tour, Campus Progress can't help pushing an ideology. Some worry that the organization, run in part by former Clinton Administration officials, is more interested in promoting a centrist agenda than a strong, progressive alternative to the campus right. Several students who attended last summer's National Student Conference—where the keynote speaker was none other than Bill Clinton—felt that truly progressive perspectives were lacking. One panel, "Stronger and Smarter National Security," featured three panelists who, despite their criticism of George W. Bush's handling of the war, advocated expanding the military presence in Iraq. The subject of withdrawing troops was not even broached.

On the day of the conference, an article titled "What Is Progressive" was prominently displayed on the Campus Progress website, reading like a Port Huron statement for the new movement. "Progressivism," wrote Cornell University senior and Campus Progress intern Andrew Garib, "is far more flexible than any one ideology. Traditionally, conservatives see the world, especially human nature, as predictable and static. Liberals are often burdened with endless optimism—a belief that all problems can be solved through implementing utopian visions." The new student politics emerging from the conference should be defined not by revolutionary idealism, Garib wrote, but by pragmatism: "See the world for what it is, accept it as ever-changing and dynamic, and choose the best course of action in line with decidedly American values."

To Ishaan Tharoor, who edits the Campus Progress–funded Yale *Hippolytic*, Garib's manifesto was rife with centrist ambiguity. Tharoor fears the new progressive student movement will be dominated by "a cadre of résumé-pushing College Dems" who value expediency over principle. To Tharoor that's hardly the most "pragmatic" way to contest the right-wing movement's deeply held and sharply defined views. "Their extremism can only be taken to task by our own 'politics of conviction,'" Tharoor wrote on the Campus Progress blog. "As long as we cling to the...shadows of a Clintonian past and timidly skirt the issues that truly divide our country, that politics shall never emerge."

Halperin insists that Campus Progress is eager to bring students across the left's spectrum into the fold. If the ideological diversity of the students at the conference was limited, he chalks that up to the fact that Campus Progress recruited a large portion of the attendees from the DC-based progressive organizations where many work as interns. The 2006 conference, he vows, will reflect a broader outreach.

"My biggest concern from the beginning about CAP getting involved in the campus biz is that we would look like the McDonald's or Microsoft of progressive organizing—that it would be sort of corporate-style, clean, gleaming and neat, and not the kind of messy, grassroots, crunchy or angry version of what campus organizing is supposed to look like," Halperin says. "We've tried very hard, without compromising what we stand for, to make sure that we are serious about progressive values, and that we believe in inclusion."

Campus Progress has funded several student papers with strong left-wing content, like the University of Texas *Issue*, which recently featured an interview with a member of the radical Landless Workers Movement in Brazil. Thus far, Campus Progress has not engaged in any editorial oversight. "Anytime CAP is associated with something far left, it's going to hurt us," Halperin says, "but if we're censoring students, it's also going to be a problem." He acknowledges that "we'd have a problem if students were writing editorials in support of the Iraqi insurgency or calling for the elimination of the state of Israel."

How, I asked, would Campus Progress respond if students requested radical intellectual Noam Chomsky as a speaker? After all, right-wing groups like Young America's Foundation almost exclusively fund speakers from the radical end of the right's spectrum. "Well, I don't think Chomsky would do business with us," Halperin replied. "But let's say we planned to bring Al Gore to campuses, and students said, 'How about bringing Ralph Nader to debate him?' If that's what they wanted, we'd do it."

Campus Progress began this past fall to offer student activism grants, some of which will promote causes that extend beyond the mainstream aims of the Frist-a-Buster—like the $1,000 given to students organizing a living-wage campaign at Vanderbilt University. According to director Iara Peng, YP4 also wants to emphasize bottom-up initiatives. "There was no way we could design this program from the top down and tell students what to do," says Peng. "We made a deliberate choice to break out of the right-wing model and allow students to define us."

On each campus, YP4 chooses three fellows (often with differing ideologies) who collectively agree on an activism project.

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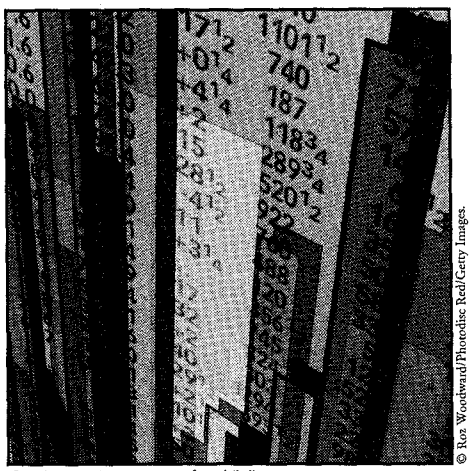

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YP4-sponsored activities have included living-wage and anti–Wal-Mart activism. Notably missing from the list of YP4 efforts—not to mention those sponsored by Campus Progress—is antiwar activism, arguably *the* core cause of the day among progressives. According to Peng, students from only one campus, Southern Methodist University, have expressed any interest in Iraq-related organizing. But even there, it didn't happen; the Southern Methodist students "decided instead to do coalition-building with progressive organizations."

"That was the only interest we received on forty campuses," Peng said. "That is not to say fellows are not organizing on Iraq—just not through the program."

In part, that's no doubt because of the group's philosophy. "We look for issues that will not polarize people but work toward common ground," Peng says. "We're not here to totally fight the right on campuses; in some ways we're here to work together toward our collective visions. If a Republican wants to work with us and work toward a better world, great."

'We'd rather shine our shoes than dred our hair. We'd rather write policy papers than compose protest songs.'

Not all of the major efforts to organize campus progressives are coming from the outside. The Roosevelt Institution, founded by Stanford University students in the wake of the 2004 presidential election, is billed as the nation's first progressive student think tank. Providing much of Roosevelt's steam is executive director Quinn Wilhelmi, an ambitious and ultra-enthusiastic junior who quotes *Spider-Man* and Henry David Thoreau in the same breath. His message—that progressive students can and should be fighting in the war of ideas—is resonating with thousands of students across the country; the Roosevelt Institution already boasts chapters at 120 campuses.

In early October students from across the country met in Washington to present policy recommendations at the House office building's Cannon caucus room. Debuting their policy journal, the *Roosevelt Review*, students held forth on relatively mainstream topics ranging from AIDS prevention to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge crisis. At the launch of Yale's Roosevelt chapter this fall, students donned formal attire, nibbled on fancy hors d'oeuvres and watched a prerecorded video appearance from Hillary Clinton.

"This was not our parents' campus activism," Yale senior Sarah Laskow wrote of the event on CampusProgress.org. "So much the better, say the Roosevelt kids. We'd rather shine our shoes than dred our hair. We'd rather speak alongside our political leaders than shout out rhetoric from campus quads. We'd rather write policy papers than compose protest songs. The political elders have used us for our bodies and our energies. Now we want to offer them our minds. Our politics of revolution pushes not for actions but for ideas."

Wilhelmi says that the Roosevelt Institution is not an attempt to replace grassroots activism but rather to complement it. "Nothing would have happened in the '60s without the sit-ins, but nothing would have happened without the Civil Rights Act either," he says. "I hope students will do both. I hope they'll do the sit-ins and then also work toward getting a city government to pass a law." He also maintains that Roosevelt will be a "big tent" for progressive ideas. Even though the organization is courting DLC darling Hillary Clinton, it has *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel and liberal philosopher Richard Rorty on its advisory board.

Some progressives are suspicious of the professionalism of the Roosevelt movement, fearing it is already marginalizing traditional left-wing activism on campuses. "Anything could happen, but at this point the pendulum seems like it's swinging toward the center-left—Roosevelt, Campus Progress—the fine, upstanding, clean-shaven young white men standing up for this new brand of progressivism," said one student organizer (speaking on condition of anonymity because "they're already too powerful"). "It's no heir to SDS."

I asked the former president of Students for a Democratic Society, Todd Gitlin, now a professor at the Columbia School of Journalism, for his thoughts about the trends on the new student left. "I think there's a desire for results, a hard-bitten realism," says Gitlin. "The primary goal is not some sort of symbolic display, or some sort of posture or attitude, but results. If that's what it means, then I applaud the turn to practicality. Today the far right is in charge, and I don't think you can create the possibility of broad-based radicalism until you defeat the far right. Put the center in power and then you have the possibility—or the luxury—of radicalism."

But SDS co-founder and lifelong activist Tom Hayden is wary of organizations that emphasize efficacy over ideals. "Students are being channeled into the Democratic Party or other mainstream institutions that will never bring about social change without a challenge and pressure from idealistic and free-thinking campus activists," says Hayden. None of the issues Hayden believes are "the great moral challenges before this generation"—the Iraq War, fighting the oil companies, resisting the pressure of military recruiters, debating alternatives to corporate-led globalization—are being pushed by the groups organizing campus progressives. "The immediate need," says Hayden, "is to say no to those who would channel students into safe alternatives to these challenges."

The right has created a student movement not simply by providing infrastructure but by promoting hard-core conservative ideology on campuses. The fledgling effort to organize campus progressives has provided the much needed infrastructure. But if progressive students are encouraged to embrace pragmatic politics over bold and sweeping challenges to the status quo, could something else—something essential—be lost? After all, radical students have stood at the forefront of many critical battles in this country, propelling social change by refusing to think within the accepted boundaries of debate. What will it mean for the progressive movement in the long run if cries for a new society are replaced by calls for incremental improvement? Is the future of the progressive movement better off in the hands of young pragmatists or young visionaries? ■

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THE GLOBAL RULING CLASS DEPENDS ON US POWER—WHICH IS SLIPPING INTO CRISIS.

The Party of Davos

JEFF FAUX

The world's movers and shakers are convening once again in January at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, the posh ski resort nestled in the Swiss Alps. Attendance is invitation-only, enforced by police barricades, razor wire and the latest high-tech military hardware to guard against terrorists, protesters and curious local citizens.

TIM LANE

Some 2,000 people will show up to discuss the world's problems as defined by those who own and manage the great global concentrations of wealth (Microsoft, Citigroup, Siemens, Nestlé, Nomura Holdings, Saudi Basic Industries, etc.). Their guests include prominent political leaders, international bureaucrats, academics, consultants and media pundits—with a few NGO and labor union officials sprinkled along the edges to demonstrate diversity.

Davos is not the place for secret conspiracies. More than 200 hovering journalists will dispatch to the world's citizens breathless accounts of the chatter and charm of the masters of the economic universe. Davos is rather the most visible symbol of the virtual political network that governs the global market in the absence of a world government. It is more like a political convention, where elites get to sniff one another out, identify which ideas and people are "sound" and come away with increased chances that their phone calls will be returned by those one notch above them in the global pecking order.

Americans are of course prominent members of this "Party of Davos," which relies on the financial and military might of the US superpower to support its agenda. In exchange, the American members of the Party of Davos get a privileged place for their projects—and themselves. Whether it's at Davos, at NATO headquarters or in the boardroom of the International Monetary Fund, heads turn and people listen more carefully when the American speaks.

"Davos Man," a term coined by nationalist scholar Samuel Huntington, is bipartisan. To be sure, Democrats tend to be more comfortable with the forum's informal seminar-style and big-think topics like global poverty, cultural diversity and executive stress. Bill Clinton goes often, and Al Gore, John Kerry, Robert Rubin, Madeleine Albright, Joe Biden and other prominent Democrats are familiar faces. Republicans generally prefer more private venues. George W. Bush, of course, doesn't do anything unscripted. But people like Dick Cheney, Newt Gingrich, John McCain and Condoleezza Rice have all worked the Davos circuit.

Jeff Faux was the founder of and is now distinguished fellow at the Economic Policy Institute. His latest book, The Global Class War *(Wiley), was published in January.*

That the global economy is developing a global ruling class should come as no shock. All markets generate economic class differences. In stable, self-contained national economies, where capital and labor need each other, political bargaining produces a social contract that allows enough wealth to trickle down from the top to keep the majority loyal. "What's good for General Motors is good for America," Dwight Eisenhower's Defense Secretary famously said in the 1950s. The United Auto Workers agreed, which at the time seemed to toss the notion of class warfare into the dustbin of history.

But as domestic markets become global, investors increasingly find workers, customers and business partners almost anywhere. Not surprisingly, they have come to share more economic interests with their peers in other countries than with people who simply have the same nationality. They also share a common interest in escaping the restrictions of their domestic social contracts.

The class politics of this new world economic order is obscured by the confused language that filters the globalization debate from talk radio to Congressional hearings to university seminars. On the one hand, we are told that the flow of money and goods across borders is making nation-states obsolete. On the other, global economic competition is almost always defined as conflict among national interests. Thus, for example, the US press warns us of a dire economic threat from China. Yet much of the "Chinese" menace is a business partnership between China's commissars, who supply the cheap labor, and America's (and Japan's and Europe's) capitalists, who supply the technology and capital. "World poverty" is likewise framed as an issue of the distribution of wealth between rich and poor countries, ignoring the existence of rich people in poor countries and poor people in rich countries.

The conventional wisdom makes globalization synonymous with "free trade" among autonomous nations. Yet as Renato Ruggiero, the first director-general of the World Trade Organization, noted in a rare moment of candor, "We are no longer writing the rules of interaction among separate national economies. We are writing *the constitution of a single global economy*." (Emphasis added.)

On the board of many transnational companies, Ruggiero has been both trade and foreign minister in the Italian government of right-wing businessman Silvio Berlusconi. He is now the chair of Citigroup's Swiss subsidiary. His fellow authors of the Davosian constitution have similar résumés, tracking careers that flow easily across borders and between public and private sectors. After just stepping down as German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder has become board chair of a Russian com-

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pany building a gas pipeline that Schröder himself had negotiated while in office. And so it goes.

In the absence of global democracy, the forces that act as counterweights to the power of the investor class in national economies—labor, civil society and progressive political parties—are too weak and unorganized to create a global social contract. What might be called the "Party of Porto Alegre"—the NGO activists of the World Social Forum, who also meet annually (usually in Brazil, this year in Venezuela, Mali and Pakistan) in January—is hardly a match for Davos. It is therefore no surprise that the constitution of the world economy protects just one class of global citizen—the corporate investor.

Given the influence of American elites, the model for this constitution is the North American Free Trade Agreement, conceived under Ronald Reagan, nurtured by George H.W. Bush and delivered by Bill Clinton. Among other things, NAFTA's 1,000-plus pages give international investors extraordinary rights to override government protections of workers and the environment. It sets up secret panels, rife with conflicts of interest, to judge disputes from which there is no appeal. It makes virtually all nonmilitary government services subject to privatization and systematically undercuts the public sector's ability to regulate business. Jorge Castañeda, later Mexico's foreign secretary, observed that NAFTA was "an agreement for the rich and powerful in the United States, Mexico and Canada, an agreement effectively excluding ordinary people in all three societies."

In the fall of 1993 a corporate lobbyist, exasperated by my opposition to NAFTA, stopped me in the corridor of the Capitol. "Don't you understand?" she demanded. "We have to help [then–Mexican President Carlos] Salinas. He's been to Harvard. He's one of us."

Her reference to "us" seemed odd. Neither she nor I was a Harvard graduate. So it took me a while to get her point: "We" internationally mobile professionals had a shared interest in liberating similarly mobile global investors from regulations imposed by national governments on behalf of people who were, well, not like "us." Despite the considerable social distance between Salinas and both of us, she was appealing to class solidarity.

It's impossible to understand why Democratic Party leaders collaborated with Republicans to establish NAFTA unless reference is made to cross-border class interests. There was no compelling economic or political reason for Bill Clinton to make NAFTA a priority in his first year as President. In economic terms, nothing was broken that needed fixing. Politically, NAFTA and the WTO that followed traded away the interests of the Democratic Party's blue-collar electoral base while creating a bonanza for Republican constituencies on Wall Street and in red-state agribusiness.

But Clinton was more Davos than Democrat. Tutored by financier Robert Rubin, a prodigious fundraiser who became his Treasury Secretary, Clinton embraced a reactionary, pre–New Deal vision of a global future in which corporate investors were unregulated and the social contract was history. Indeed, in all three countries it was the leaders of the political parties that had historically claimed to represent ordinary

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people—the Democrats' Clinton, the Liberal Party's Jean Chrétien and the Institutional Revolutionary Party's Salinas—who delivered NAFTA to their global corporate clients, undercutting their own constituencies. "NAFTA happened," said the then-chairman of American Express, "because of the drive Bill Clinton gave it. He stood up against his two prime constituents, labor and environment, to drive it home over their dead bodies."

A year later, in November 1994, enough angry Democratic voters stayed away from the polls to give the Republicans control of the House. Since then, many working-class Americans, feeling abandoned by the Democrats, have responded to the Republican definition of class struggle as a fight over gun control, school prayer and abortion. The Democrats have still not recovered.

Consistent with a deal among the rich and powerful, NAFTA made the distribution of income, wealth and political power more unequal throughout the continent. In all three countries, wages in manufacturing fell behind productivity increases, shifting income from labor to capital. Ordinary Mexicans especially went through the economic wringer—to which the willingness of hundreds of thousands of them to risk their lives each year crossing the border continues to be tragic testimony.

On the other hand, opportunities blossomed for the rich and powerful in all three nations. American and Canadian investors got access to cheaper labor and privatized Mexican companies, while Mexican oligarchs got to broker the deals. One example was the way NAFTA was used to open up Mexico's banking system to foreign ownership, profiting elites on both sides of the border.

The governments of Carlos Salinas and his successor, Ernesto Zedillo—hailed in Washington as great free-market reformers—privatized government-owned banks, turning them over to business cronies, and, through NAFTA, revoked the legal ban on foreign ownership. When the banks started to fail, they were given huge government subsidies to make them attractive to transnational buyers. At the same time, the "reform" government was slashing subsidies to the poor for food and medicine.

Banamex, the country's second-largest bank, was bought by a Mexican syndicate, owned by Salinas pal Roberto Hernandez Rodriguez, for $3.2 billion and when, thanks to NAFTA, foreigners were allowed to own Mexican banks, it was resold to Citigroup for $12.5 billion. Robert Rubin negotiated the deal for Citigroup, where he had gone after leaving the Treasury Department. The Mexican government's welfare program for Citigroup and other foreign investors continues: In 2003 government subsidies to private banks (more than 85 percent of them now owned by foreigners) were almost three times those spent on roads, schools and other infrastructure.

NAFTA was only the beginning. The Clinton/Republican alliance then pushed through the WTO agreement and the subsequent deal with China that traded off more US industrial jobs in exchange for protections for US investors in that huge Asian market. Not only has this produced a massive trade deficit with China and further downward pressure on US wages, it has also sent some 250,000 jobs from Mexico to China. The ubiquitous Citigroup, with banking operations in 100 countries, is now busy building its

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Chinese banking empire—with Chinese partners.

That well-connected people who move in and out of government and business act in ways that benefit their class and take advantage of their contacts to further their own interests is neither illegal nor new. That's the way class privilege works. Thus, it is unlikely that Dick Cheney ever ordered anyone at the Pentagon to give a huge sole-source contract to Halliburton. He did not have to. Procurement officers already knew the relationship between the company and the Vice President. And Cheney's promotion of more funds for the military and for the war in Iraq in particular was bound to benefit the world to which he belonged—his circle of rich and powerful people who would always be there for him and his projects.

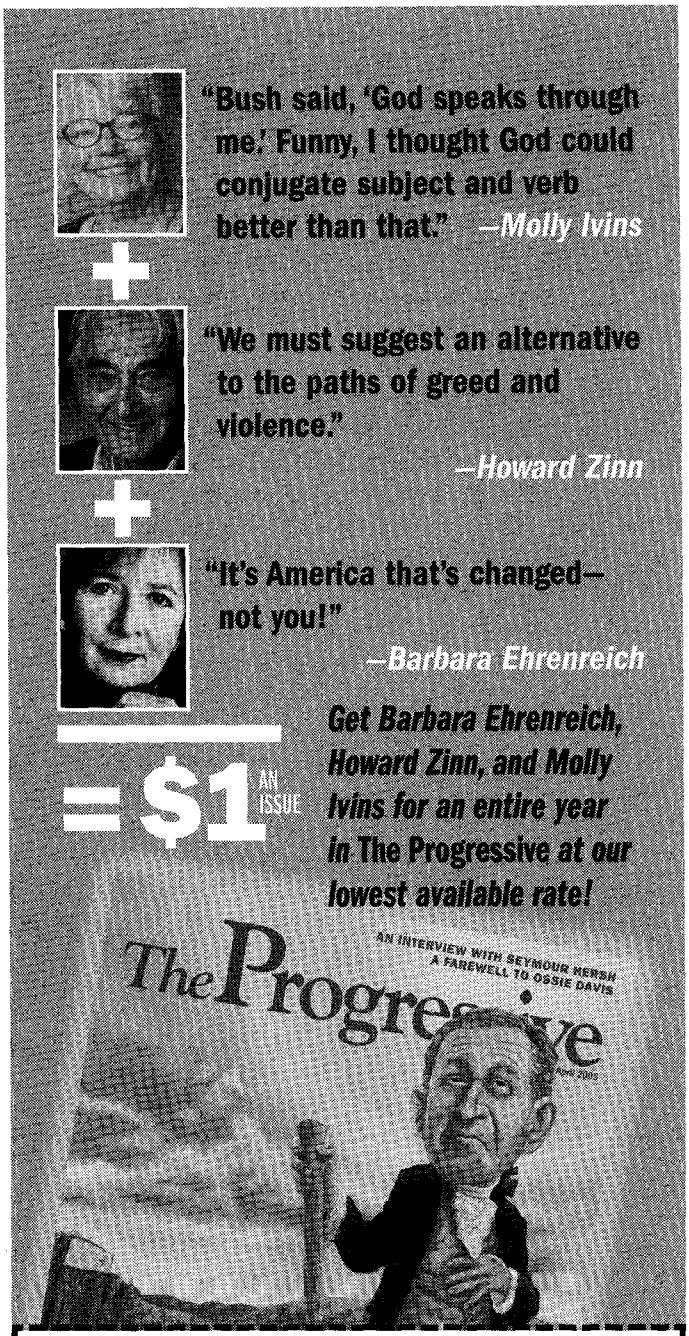
There are of course important differences between the ways the elites of the different parties promote the Davos agenda. The preferred instruments of Rubin Democrats are the economic levers of the US Treasury, the IMF, the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Rumsfeld/Cheney Republicans prefer the Defense and Energy departments. The Rubin mode is certainly less lethal and probably more effective. Still, Davos relies on the Pentagon to protect its class privileges with a worldwide web of military bases, training schools and the always-present threat to send in the Marines. It's worth remembering that virtually the only section of Saddam Hussein's law still untouched by the US occupation is its oppressive labor code.

But the twin pillars of the US superpower—the Pentagon and Wall Street—are slipping into their own crises and soon may not be able to provide the military and economic muscle for the Davos agenda.

The crisis on the military side involves blowback from the overreach in Iraq. Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld—despite their thick transnational corporate connections—have created a disaster for Davos. The war has unleashed an army of enemies of Western modernization that is making global corporations nervous. Two years ago the wiser heads at Davos were appalled at Cheney's delusional report on the Bush Administration's progress in turning the Middle East into a shopping mall—however much they might have sympathized with the objective. Today the mess in Iraq has revealed to Davos both the incompetence of the American governing class and the unwillingness of the American electorate to make the sacrifices necessary to act as security police for the world's rich and powerful.

The looming economic crisis comes from the unsustainable US external debt. For more than a quarter-century, we Americans have been buying more from the rest of the world than we have been selling it, and borrowing from abroad to make up the difference. The resulting trade deficit has been a major engine of global growth under Davos's management. But common sense and simple arithmetic tell us that even the United States cannot go on much longer spending more than it is earning.

When the day of reckoning comes, high interest rates and a falling dollar will force us Americans to rebalance our trade by cutting the price of what we sell and raising the price of what we buy, lowering real incomes. The crisis in the nation's trade sector will be transmitted to the rest of the economy, made vulnerable by overindebted consumers, overleveraged pension funds and


"Bush said, 'God speaks through me.' Funny, I thought God could conjugate subject and verb better than that." —Molly Ivins
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overpriced houses. Thanks to George W. Bush's reckless fiscal deficits, the government will have less ability to overcome an economic crisis through borrow-and-spend, as it did in the last economic downturn. With the appetite for America's IOUs diminishing, US politicians will have their hands full dealing with rising energy costs and the tottering finances of healthcare, education and pensions.

The basics of a harder-times scenario are not much in dispute. The debate is between those who foresee a hard landing and those who believe that the world's central bankers will somehow figure out a way to avoid a global financial meltdown. But hard landing or soft, even the staunchest supporters of globalization admit that lower living standards are already in the cards. N. Gregory Mankiw, who as Bush's chief economist famously praised the offshoring of American jobs, recently acknowledged that US reliance on foreign savings to support its consumption means a "less prosperous future."

Financier Warren Buffett reaches the obvious conclusion: We are headed for "significant political unrest." Democratic Senator Max Baucus, a staunch free-trader, recently told Chinese business executives that unless they cut their country's trade deficit with America "US politics will become unmanageable." *New York Times* columnist and Davos champion Thomas Friedman, who also sees the writing on the wall, suggests dividing political parties by economic class, with Republican Wall Street joining with Democratic Hollywood against disgruntled working-class "populists" in both red and blue states.

But working-class disgruntlement is likely to go beyond Freidman's stereotype of uneducated losers. The outsourcing and downsizing of opportunities is already adding to the insecurity of people much further up the skill ladder. There are signs that the anxiety is spreading to the business class as well; within organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the owners of smaller and medium-sized businesses, who still depend on an American workforce, are beginning to dissent from the once united front in favor of globalization.

Resistance to Davos is also growing in our own hemispheric neighborhood. Latin American oligarchs who prospered by selling their countries' assets and people to transnational investors have been ousted in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Bolivia. In Mexico, which is having a presidential election this July, a leftist critic of NAFTA leads in the polls. The Party of Davos may not be over, but the rest of the world seems less willing to foot the bill.

Here in America, the coming unrest could turn right as well as left. The Republican Party is hopelessly tied to the multinational priorities of the US business elite, but its managers are skilled at stoking nationalist resentment among the working-class victims.

In the two-party system the burden therefore rests on the Democrats' ability to produce leaders who are not co-opted by the Party of Davos. Given the current crop, our chances may not seem great. But leaders are often produced by the times. As globalization's squeeze on ordinary Americans continues, the political price will rise for those who continue to give priority to bringing Burger King to Baghdad over healthcare to Baltimore. It's worth remembering that Franklin Roosevelt, who was as elite and privileged as one could get, responded to the economic crisis of his time by becoming—as they muttered in the best clubs—"a traitor to his class." ■

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

In 2000 the NLRB issued a unanimous decision granting graduate assistants at private universities, including NYU, the right to unionize. This bipartisan decision harmonized federal law with that of most states, which allow GAs at public universities to form unions. The NLRB found that because GAs provide services for NYU for which they are compensated, they are employees.

In 2004 a newly constituted NLRB, dominated by Republicans who have built their careers attacking unions, overturned that decision in a case involving GAs at Brown University. The Brown decision, poorly reasoned and intellectually dishonest, is part of the radical right's antilabor campaign, which has eviscerated labor protections and reduced the number of workers shielded by the few safeguards that remain.

This Republican position, adopted by NYU, is based on several faulty premises, one of which is that teaching performed by GAs isn't real work; it's part of their academic program. Even NYU doesn't believe this. Tellingly, striking GAs haven't been threatened with expulsion from their academic programs for refusing to teach; they have been told that they won't be paid. At most universities GAs provide 30 to 50 percent of all instruction. At NYU they teach all freshman English composition courses, the overwhelming majority of language courses, other core undergraduate requirements and discussion and laboratory sections associated with large lecture classes. Courses are assigned based on NYU's instructional needs, not the pedagogical needs of the GAs. NYU receives full tuition for all GA-taught courses. It may be true, as NYU and the NLRB maintain, that teaching experience prepares graduate students for (the ever-shrinking number of) jobs in academia. But many jobs, in many fields, impart skills that allow for future advancement. In other fields this doesn't eliminate labor rights.

Another faulty premise is that GAs shouldn't be allowed to unionize because they are primarily students. It's absurd to argue that because a worker is also other things her rights as a worker are dispensable. Federal labor law doesn't exclude from its protections part-time workers who fulfill other roles.

Finally, NYU claims that bargaining threatens academic freedom. But academic workers organizing to defend their interests, and to compel administrators to consider their needs, is a bulwark of academic freedom. The real threat is from administrators intent on concentrating all decision-making in their own hands.

DANIEL J. RATNER, CARL J. LEVINE
Attorneys for the GAs' union

Washington, DC

■ NYU has turned the clock back on democracy and workers' rights. That's quite a serious transgression, especially coming from a university that sees itself as "sanctuary."

President John Sexton may be popular with large-donor fundraisers and his Ivy League colleagues who want to stop workers from having a voice on the job and a union contract. If he were smart, however, he'd listen more carefully to faculty members and others who have made it clear that his tactics are disgraceful and damaging to the reputation of the university.

Instead, Sexton is following the corporate management playbook to the letter—by threatening students with an ultimatum that they end their strike or be fired. That's all too familiar to workers across America forced to pay a price every day for rights that are now better protected in Taiwan, South Africa and Brazil.

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On December 10, International Human Rights Day, US workers and allies rallied in 100 cities, and were joined by activists from China to Europe, to make the case that bargaining rights and democracy are inextricably linked. In the weeks ahead Sexton will realize that the movement for true democracy is alive and well at NYU. Graduate student workers across the country must see NYU's action as both the disgrace it is and the wake-up call that student workers everywhere need in order to restore their workplace rights. The rest of us must stand up and support them.

The Communications Workers of America fully supports the Graduate Student Organizing Committee and the UAW at NYU. We stand with graduate student workers everywhere who want to exercise their basic democratic rights. LARRY COHEN, *president, Communications Workers of America*

Brooklyn, NY

■ Our first contract raised our stipends by an average of 40 percent and provided employer-paid healthcare and training for NYU graduate assistants. Members of GSOC/UAW Local 2110 as well as NYU undergraduates, faculty and even administrators have attested that our contract has made us better at our jobs and has made NYU a better university. The reaction of John Sexton and the NYU administration to our strike has only underscored why we need a second contract. MICHAEL PALM
Chair, GSOC/UAW Local 2110
PhD candidate, NYU

Ithaca, NY

■ As one of the nation's leading experts in organizing under the NLRB, I have analyzed tens of thousands of NLRB election campaigns. NYU's campaign against its graduate students stands out to me because it represents a nonprofit institution that seems to have forgotten that it is in the business of higher education. It is making major employment decisions that will have a lasting impact on the quality of education of its undergraduate student body based solely on its own antiunion animus and the antiunion animus of the consortium of other universities that have joined NYU in the fight against the right of graduate students to engage in collective bargaining.

This means that instead of choosing TAs based on their expertise, teaching ability or experience, the sole criterion determining whether a graduate student will be teaching at NYU this spring is, Did he/she participate in the strike? Suddenly the business of the university has become strikebreaking and unionbusting, not education.

But that is the least of the tragedy. A lifetime ago, it seems, there was a notion of PhD students as apprentices, learning at the knee of the greatest scholars, who worked side by side with them, teaching them their trade, mentoring them. Graduate students were assigned to faculty in their field and were trained, supervised, evaluated and mentored, and they advanced with a guarantee of a professorship upon completion of their degree.

But for at least a quarter-century, graduate students have increasingly been doing more of the work while fewer tenure-track lines are being added. Graduate TAs are assigned classes based on department needs, given minimal training and supervision, rarely mentored and rarely teach the subject they actually plan to teach. And unfortunately, few are guaranteed a job upon completion of their degree. Instead of an educational opportunity, their teaching is the primary means through which they support themselves while going to graduate school. It is a job. One with long hours, low pay and limited benefits, but a job just the same—one that fits any definition of employee that the framers of the National Labor Relations Act had in mind.

Yes, Bush's hand-picked NLRB overturned the ruling granting graduate students at NYU the right to organize, but the tides will shift again, and eventually no one will be able to deny the truth. Graduate students are workers; they are doing the work of universities when they are acting as teaching assistants. Universities are not teaching GAs how to be professors; GAs are making the machinery of the university work, and they are critical to the ability of universities to remain financially solvent. If graduate assistants did not exist, universities would have to hire adjunct faculty to take their place—or go back to hiring more tenure-track faculty. They can be replaced only with other employees because they are employees. It is time for NYU to start making decisions based on what is best for its students.

KATE BRONFENBRENNER
Director of Labor Education Research
Cornell University

SHERMAN REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ Derrick Bell's letter is a pitch-perfect recitation of the official NYU position, and his missive bears a close resemblance to the university's press releases relating to the GSOC/UAW strike. Bell stamps my piece "one-sided." But I carefully reported both sides of this story. I had extensive telephone and e-mail contact with NYU spokesman John Beckman, and I very much wanted to include the voice of President Sexton, but he declined to be interviewed. My article arrived at a conclusion Bell doesn't like; but that does not automatically make it one-sided.

Bell proclaims that "about 10 percent" of NYU's graduate assistants are on strike. But how can he be certain? Alas, the union won't say how many GAs are striking (although it does affirm that more than 700 GSOC members voted to strike), and NYU itself probably doesn't have an exact number either, since certain departments where GSOC is strong have refused to pass along that information to the NYU administration.

As I noted in the article, which was hardly "ad hominem," talks between NYU and GSOC/UAW broke down because NYU insisted on an open shop along with a grievance procedure that did not entail binding arbitration. An August 2, 2005, letter from Terrance Nolan, NYU's director of labor relations, to Elizabeth Bunn, secretary-treasurer of the UAW, put forth NYU's "final proposal" for a contract: "In the new agreement," Nolan wrote, "there will be no provision for arbitration. All grievances and disputes under the Agreement will be fully and finally decided by the Provost of the University or his/her designee." Bunn replied on August 4: "A key component to every contract," she wrote, "is a fair and neutral dispute resolution procedure.... Yet, you are proposing that the University decides in every case whether the University has violated the agreement. Such a notion is simply inconsistent with the concept of having a meaningful contract." The contract expired August 31.

In justifying its hard-line attitude, NYU has recently insisted, as does Bell in his letter, that GSOC/UAW interfered with academic decision-making and thereby abused the grievance process. "In 2001," Sexton wrote in an October 21 letter to parents of NYU students, the university "signed a contract with the UAW...because we received written assurances from the UAW that it would not seek to interfere with academic decision-making. Unfortunately, the Union did not keep its promise."

One should treat this assertion with skepticism. During the four-year contract, there were approximately fifty grievances involving NYU and GSOC/UAW. NYU has released details concerning three of them. Space constraints prevent me from delving into these cases, none of which can be quickly summarized, but I refer interested readers to a November 3 essay by NYU physics professor Alan Sokal, in which he provides a detailed critique of two grievances (see "Some Thoughts on the Unionization of Graduate Assistants" at www.facultydemocracy.org). Sokal, who argues that neither side was clearly in the right, insists nevertheless that NYU's public characterization of the grievances as purely "academic matters" and "not about economics" is a "gross oversimplification."

Many observers at NYU view the administration's "academic interference" argument as empty rhetoric that serves to conceal a deep hostility to unions in general and the UAW in particular. Sokal captures this point well in his essay: "The issue is *not* whether unionization of grad students is good for the grad students, or good for the university," he writes. "The sole issue is whether the graduate assistants... should be *allowed* to bargain collectively with the University." He concludes: "The University Administration adamantly opposes such collective representation irrespective of whether 51% or 67% or 99% of the grad students desire it. This has been their consistent position ever since the students' organizing drive began in the mid-1990s. In the late 1990s they spent several million dollars of the University's money (the precise figure has never been made public) on anti-union lawyers in a failed effort to prevent a representation election. They relented on their no-union position only during the brief period (2001–05) when federal law forced them to."

SCOTT SHERMAN

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

clude supporting affirmative action (Ellen DuBois), organizing a memorial meeting for Edward Said (Sondra Hale), opposing the confirmation of John Roberts as Chief Justice (Christine Littleton), supporting gay rights (Eric Avila) and arguing that Bush stole the 2000 election in Florida (Doug Kellner). As Russell Jacoby noted in these pages ["The New PC: Crybaby Conservatives," April 4, 2005], "Once an unreliable professor meant an anarchist or communist; now it includes Democrats."

A search of all thirty professor profiles turns up only one report claiming to document classroom misconduct: Avila, according to Jones, told a Chicano studies class in 2003 that an antiwar protest was being held on campus, and he "expected to see everyone there." But Avila told me, "That report is false. However, in 1998 or 1999 I had a course assignment for students to observe a demonstration and bring their observations back to the classroom for discussion. In that context I probably said I expected to see the students at the demonstration. But I haven't repeated that assignment since 1999."

Many faculty on the list are angry. Law professor Gary Blasi suggests with pointed sarcasm that he and the rest of the Dirty Thirty should ask the Bruin Alumni Association to provide "specific guidance as to things we are forbidden to say in classrooms, or things that are mandatory to discuss that we may have overlooked." There's no sign that any of the listed faculty members are backing down—on the contrary. Robert Brenner teaches a course on Karl Marx's *Capital* but was not listed. "It's humiliating," he told me. "I didn't even make the top thirty." Jacoby did make the Dirty Thirty but was disappointed to be second from last. "I've inquired discreetly," he says, "as to how one can move up on the list."

Andrew Jones has gotten his fifteen minutes of fame, with appearances on Fox News and MSNBC. But mostly he has taken a beating. At least four members of his advisory board have quit, all prominent conservatives. One, Harvard historian Stephan Thernstrom, a well-known opponent of affirmative action, said it was "vigilantism" to pay students to turn in information on professors. And the *Los Angeles Times* devoted an editorial to criticizing Jones for attacking academic freedom.

The initial UCLA response came from a university lawyer who warned that students who sold audiotapes of lectures could be violating professors' intellectual property rights. That forced Jones to withdraw his offer of payment. But that's not really the problem. UCLA chancellor Albert Carnesale did the right thing when he declared in an official statement about Jones that "the UCLA community...finds his methods reprehensible, even as we support every critic's right freely to express his or her views." The chancellor said, "We sympathize with and support our faculty colleagues who have been targeted in this way, and we share their anger and frustration." JON WIENER

Jon Wiener, a Nation *contributing editor, teaches history at the University of California, Irvine; his most recent book is* Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud and Politics in the Ivory Tower *(New Press).*

In Fact . . .

THE NEW LEADER: RIP

■ Victor Navasky writes: Carey McWilliams, the late, great editor of *The Nation*, used to say that to many of its readers the magazine was a lantern in the dark. That is probably true for other journals of opinion—even those with whom we have had our deep differences, like *The New Leader*, whose editor, Myron Kolatch, announced recently that it was going out of business. Originally founded in 1924 by Norman Thomas as an organ of the Socialist Party, it went its own way after a bitter ideological split. Arguably it has been drifting rightward, except in the area of cultural coverage, ever since; at one point it even dined at the CIA trough. Which is not to say that over the years it did not publish valuable articles, including those by communist dissidents like Milovan Djilas and by a dazzling array of contributors, many of whom also wrote for *The Nation*, including Robert Lekachman, Reinhold Niebuhr and James Baldwin. Ironically, when in 1955 Freda Kirchwey invited McWilliams to replace her as *Nation* editor, he agreed on one condition—that she drop the magazine's libel suit against *The New Leader*. (When *The New Leader* ran a letter to the editor from *The Nation*'s former art critic Clement Greenberg, accusing its foreign editor, Julio Álvarez del Vayo, of being a party-line Stalinist, del Vayo wanted to "punch him in the nose," but Kirchwey chose instead to sue for libel.) Kirchwey dropped the suit, and we're glad she did. As Yale law professor Thomas Emerson wrote at the time, "Resort to the courts cut off further argument and, in effect, brought a breakdown in the rational exchange of ideas." We regret that *The New Leader*'s light has gone out, and we will miss the exchange of ideas that, at its best, it helped nourish.

NATION NOTES

■ Naomi Klein is taking a leave from her "Lookout" column until the fall, while she tends to her book on disaster capitalism. Gary Younge, the Alfred Knobler Journalism Fellow at The Nation Institute, will be writing a monthly column in her place titled "Beneath the Radar" (see page 10). Younge, the New York correspondent for the *Guardian*, is the author of *No Place Like Home: A Black Briton's Journey Through the Deep South* (Mississippi) and the forthcoming *Stranger in a Strange Land: Travels in the Disunited States* (New Press). • With this issue Betsy Reed, who has been a senior editor at the magazine since 1998 and has edited special issues on music, marriage and torture, assumes the role of executive editor.

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

■ Contributing editor Tom Hayden reports from Bolivia about the inauguration of Evo Morales and the challenges he faces as that nation's first indigenous president (www.thenation.com).

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

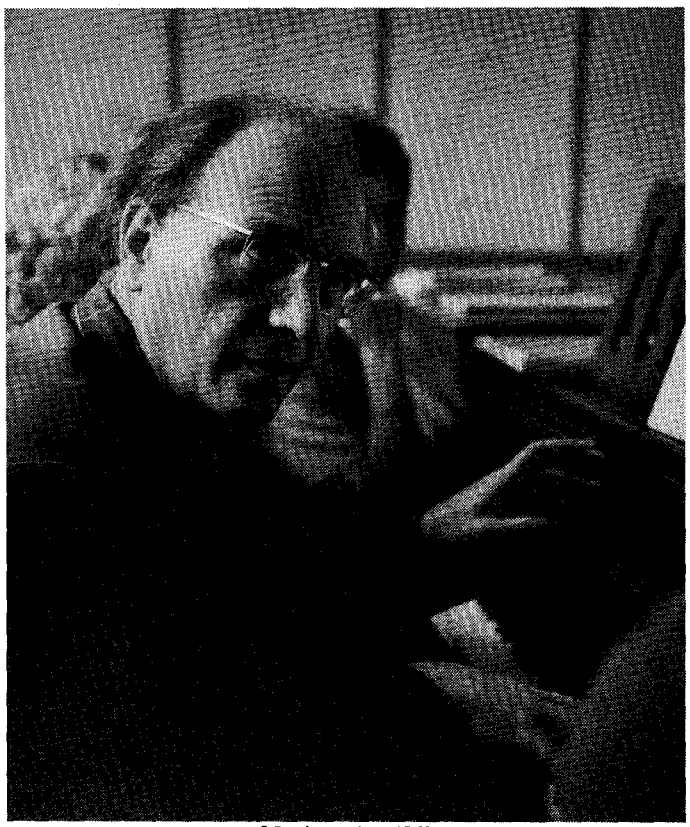
Music for the End of Time

DAVID SCHIFF

MESSIAEN.
By Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone.
Yale. 435 pp. $45.

As composer, organist, teacher and theorist, Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) was the most influential European musician of the second half of the twentieth century—and yet he was in many ways far removed from his time and place. His religious beliefs were those of a pious medieval Catholic; his musical style ignored just about everything that had happened in European music between the troubadours and Wagner. He cobbled together a personal idiom out of bits and pieces of musical techniques and sources from around the world, forging them into a system he hawked with the ardent self-confidence of a traveling Bible salesman. His combination of naïve fervor, pedantry and self-made originality made him seem more like a misplaced American maverick—like Charles Ives, Henry Cowell or John Cage—than a product of French culture. And yet scarcely any Western European composers of the past sixty years have been untouched by his ideas.

Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone, the co-authors of this handsomely produced new biography, have a long association with Messiaen's music, as a performer and a writer, respectively. For their devotion they were granted access to a huge private archive of papers, photographs and memorabilia still controlled by the composer's widow, Yvonne Loriod. This relationship yields predictable strengths and weaknesses. The book fills out our knowledge of Messiaen's career and reception (Loriod must have saved every review he received in his life), but it also tends to frame controversies in a defensive manner and fails to deal forthrightly with some of the touchiest and most interesting aspects of his career; Claude Samuel's book of conversations with Messiaen, *Music and Color*, and Rebecca Rischin's recent history of the *Quartet for the End of Time*—a work for violin, cello, piano and clarinet famously composed and premiered at a German prisoner-of-war camp in January 1941 before an audience of fellow prisoners—convey a much more vivid sense of Messiaen's private side. But the public "and then he wrote" story told here has its own fascination.



ROBERT DOISNEAU (RAPHO/NETWORK PHOTOGRAPHERS)

Messiaen, circa 1960

The facts of Messiaen's childhood are already familiar. His father was a professor of English (though Messiaen never learned the language). His mother, Cécile Sauvage, was an important poet; her ode to motherhood, *L'Âme en bourgeon* (*The Flowering Soul*), was written while she was pregnant with the future composer. Throughout his career Messiaen, who

David Schiff, a composer and professor of music at Reed College, writes on classical music for The Atlantic.

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wrote his own texts for three song cycles and for the epic opera *Saint François d'Assise*, lauded his mother's influence on his music and poetry. Her death when he was 19 was one of two tragic personal losses that shadowed his career.

In his intellectual family, Messiaen was a much appreciated prodigy, exhibiting early signs of extraordinary ability as a pianist and composer. Although his parents were not especially religious, he discovered his defining religious worldview (if not a calling) very early in life. Not surprisingly, Messiaen's early works—like the piano *Préludes*, written (and published) when he was just 21—were rooted in French music, particularly that of Debussy and (more ambivalently) Ravel. A piano teacher gave him the score of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which became a musical bible. From Debussy he derived the use of rich chords, modal scales, medieval parallelisms and exotic echoes of East Asian music. But Debussy's music is all about evanescence; it is written on the wind and water. Messiaen dehydrated Debussy's style, draining out its temporal instability. His music is made of stone.

Messiaen also rejected those even more transient elements in both Debussy and Ravel that stemmed from jazz or from Erik Satie, the anarchic presiding spirit of French music in Messiaen's student years. He moved French music out of the cafes and back to the cathedrals. The one non-French influence on Messiaen's style was Stravinsky of the Russian period, particularly *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces*. Messiaen appropriated the Fauvist colors, asymmetric rhythms and Cubist construction of these works, along with their antirationalist subtext. His questionable analysis of Stravinsky's rhythm, a mainstay of his teaching, became the basis for his own rhythmic innovations. Stravinsky never found Messiaen's imitation flattering; "rubbish" was one of the kinder words he used for it. His antipathy mirrored Messiaen's strong revulsion to the neoclassical direction Stravinsky took in 1918, beginning with *L'Histoire du Soldat*. By his early 20s Messiaen, after receiving every possible honor at the Paris Conservatory, became the organist at the church of Sainte-Trinité, a huge Second Empire pile tellingly located midway between the Opera Garnier and Place Pigalle. His daring improvisations at the midday mass soon achieved notoriety and evolved into several masterly cycles of sacred organ music: *La Nativité du Seigneur* and *Les Corps glorieux*. (These remain the best introduction to his music, especially heard in his own performances on the four-CD set *Messiaen par lui-même*.)

In these organ works Messiaen developed most of the techniques he later codified in the treatise *Technique of My Musical Language*, particularly his systematic use of nontonal scales and rhythmic devices derived from Greek prosody, Hindu musical theory and medieval European music. All these techniques served to move his compositions out of the world familiar to most European music, with its steady pulse and recurring metrical accents. Messiaen slowed the tempos of his music almost to a standstill in order to achieve his singular expressive domain: religious ecstasy. Although Messiaen grounded these innovations in Catholic theology, other equally devout Catholics, like Nadia Boulanger and Francis Poulenc, found them perplexing. ("Messiaen and I do not genuflect in the same way," Poulenc put it charitably.) Catholic theology is many-sided; to understand Messiaen we would have to know more about how his religious vision fit into the theological teachings and debates of the time. Messiaen's faith, however, shielded him in a number of important ways. He never had to go through the crisis of ideology and social function that upended the musical careers of composers like Shostakovich, Copland or Weill during the 1930s. As organist at one of the grandest churches in Paris, his social function was as clear as his ideology. Furthermore, it might be said that ideology gave Messiaen a cover for musical experimentation. Radical rhythms and harmonies were harder to criticize when attached to the depiction of the nativity or of the glorious hereafter.

For Messiaen, music was a means to achieve religious ecstasy. He moved French music out of the cafes and back to the cathedrals.

Hill and Simeone tell us more than we have heard before about Messiaen's first wife, Claire Delbos, known familiarly as Mi. A violinist and composer, she married Messiaen in 1932. Her role as both wife and muse is clear in the two ecstatically lyrical song cycles he wrote in the 1930s; *Poèmes pour Mi* compared their marriage with that of Christ and His Church, while *Chants de terre et de ciel* celebrates the birth of their son, Pascal, in an idiom close to the recent organ cycle *La Nativité*. (The American soprano Dawn Upshaw's recordings of some of these songs are heart-stopping.) At some point, however, Delbos began to show symptoms of dementia. By the early 1950s she was institutionalized; she died in 1959. Messiaen never spoke publicly of her illness, perhaps out of reticence, perhaps because its onset coincided with the arrival of his second muse, Yvonne Loriod, who was his student at the Paris Conservatory, where he had begun working in 1941. We can get some sense of Loriod's prowess as a young pianist by the fact that she learned Bartók's Second Piano Concerto—still the hardest in the literature—in eight days. Messiaen soon dedicated a series of pieces to her, beginning with the monumental and frighteningly difficult solo piano work *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* in 1944, and the two began to concertize and travel together.

Whether Delbos's deteriorating condition and Loriod's ascendancy brought on a crisis of faith in the conspicuously pious composer we do not know, but he did dedicate much of the mid-1940s to composing a trilogy of works (*Harawi*, *Turangalîla*, *Cinq Rechants*) based on the legend of Tristan and Isolde, which Messiaen believed celebrated a perfect love in no way conflicting with Catholic belief. Even Wagner never painted forbidden love so rosily. Perhaps to assuage their source of information, Hill and Simeone interpret these works as possibly reflecting on the loss of Delbos (who was still very much alive) rather than the appearance of Loriod.

To what if any extent was Delbos's deterioration hastened by Messiaen's involvement with his student? Unfortunately Hill and Simeone leave much of this situation in shadow. They never give us a medical diagnosis of Delbos's condition, and their timeline is confusing. They do print a revealing photograph of Messiaen's and Loriod's interlaced fingers, taken in 1947—though without comment. They argue, too, that the demands of Messiaen's career distanced him further and further from Delbos. The day of her funeral he attended a rehearsal of his music without mentioning her death to anyone. He married Loriod two years later.

From June 1940 to March 1941 Messiaen, who served in the French army, was a prisoner of war. The story of the creation and premiere of his *Quartet for the End of Time* at Stalag VIIIA has recently been well retold and demythologized by Rebecca Rischin; over the years

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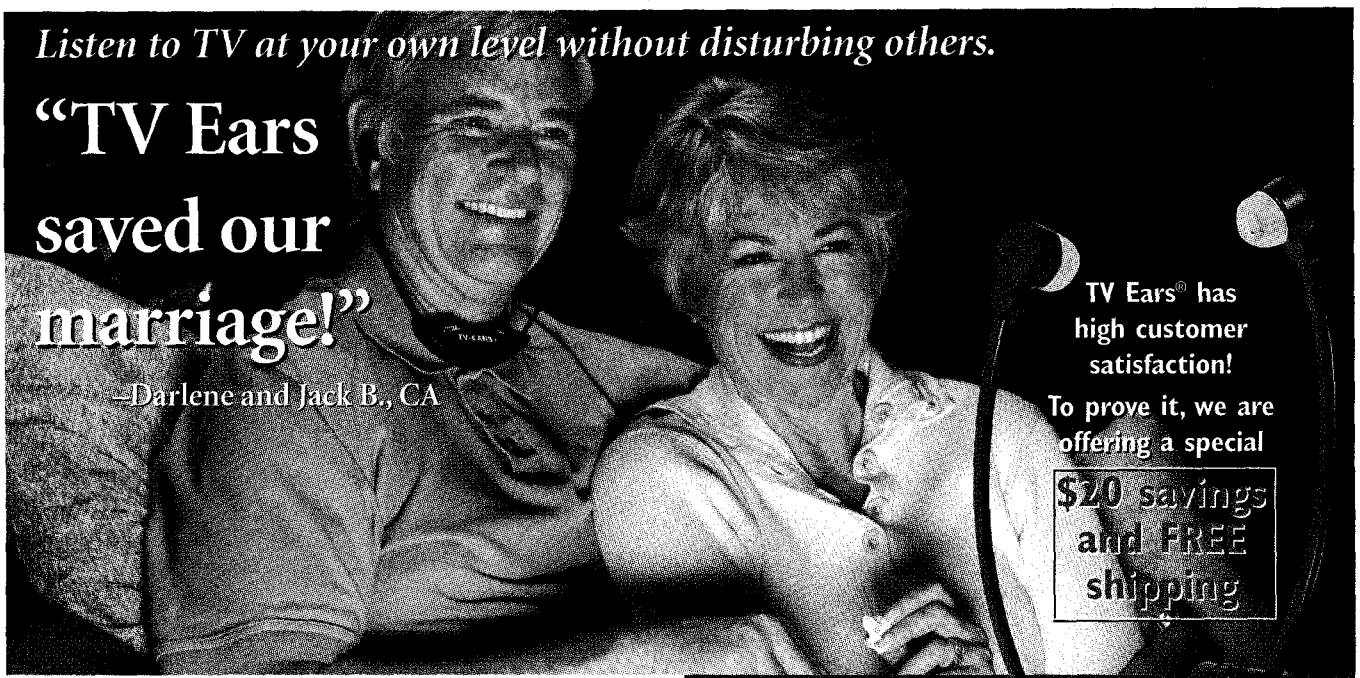

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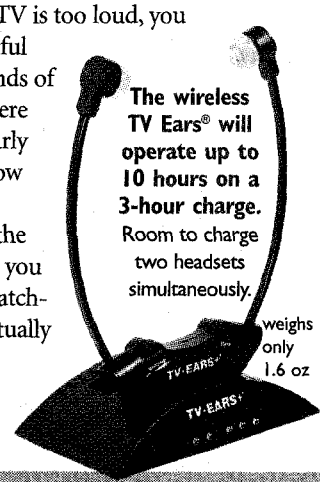

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Messiaen had grandly orchestrated the details of the birth of his most famous piece. Several things are now clear: The *Quartet* was immediately recognized as a classic even by listeners who resisted the sermons on Revelation that Messiaen delivered before each of its eight movements. And it has remained a classic of the chamber music repertory ever since. The conditions of its creation gave the *Quartet* an economy and focus rare in Messiaen's oeuvre, as well as a historical poignancy. Although it may depict the end of time, it is the only work by Messiaen that really seems incarnated in the here and now. Interestingly, its early reception suffered from the lack of an obvious political statement while, until very recently, its political content had been distorted by the often repeated claim that it was written in a concentration camp. But the *Quartet*, which summarizes Messiaen's compositional style of the 1930s and forecasts his more adventurous works to come, survives such rough treatment.

In the chapter titled (perhaps ironically) "Messiaen's war: 1940-1944," Hill and Simeone fail to clarify the politics of Messiaen's rise to prominence during the occupation. The surprisingly rich cultural life of Paris under Nazi rule remains enigmatic: Who was using whom? After the war, of course, many claimed their art was a form of protest, but the appearance of cultural vitality in Paris while Jews and others were being deported to the east was as cynical a Nazi propaganda tool as the showcasing of art in the camp at Theresienstadt. Hill and Simeone provide no evidence that Messiaen was involved with the Resistance, or that he was even aware of the atrocities around him, but they make it clear that his career came first even in such dark times. On release from POW camp Messiaen headed to Vichy to seek some kind of employment; his job application included the required statement that he had no Jewish ancestry. Messiaen soon landed a position at the Paris Conservatory; there were recent openings because Jewish faculty had been dismissed. The conservatory provided Messiaen a prime venue for major new pieces, like *Visions de l'Amen*, *Vingt Regards* and *Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine*—all featuring Loriod as performer.

The controversy surrounding the premiere of the exotically scored *Trois petites Liturgies* on April 21, 1945, gave Messiaen the *succès de scandale* expected of a modern genius. Messiaen draped the radiantly tonal harmonies of a women's chorus with an exotic instrumentation, including celesta, vibraphone, maracas and the eerie electronic whine of the Ondes Martenot. Critics either felt they had glimpsed the future or been dragged through a Technicolor travesty. Although it is never clearly articulated, it would appear that much of the controversy over the music centered on its yoking of musical experiment with orthodox belief. Some Catholics were offended by the sensual exuberance of the music, while secular intellectuals resisted its religious message.

While Messiaen used his music to express Catholic theology, his secular disciples drew from it a general theory of musical progress.

Meanwhile, Messiaen's novel approaches to teaching harmony attracted many of the best students at an institution notorious for its deadly academicism. In April 1945 some of these students made the headlines. Led by the young firebrand Pierre Boulez, they protested the first performances in Paris of two recent works by Stravinsky: *Danses concertantes* and *Four Norwegian Moods*. Given everything that was going on in the world in the spring of 1945, these lightweight bonbons by the Russian master would seem like an unlikely, even unseemly, focus for student revolt—and yet the ideological consequences of this scandal would shape music, including Stravinsky's, for twenty years to come. Suddenly, Messiaen was not just a hot young Modernist but the father figure for an even younger avant-garde. After the riot he defended their action in a transparently self-serving article: What the world needed, he wrote, was not the specious neoclassicism of Stravinsky but a truly classic music, a music of love. He wrote this as he began work on his own Tristan cycle.

At a distance of sixty years, it is hard to disentangle elements of careerism and politics from these events. Why, for instance, did Messiaen's students so vehemently reject Schoenberg's music—almost as viciously as the Nazis had recently done—while at the same time basing their plan for the musical future on his twelve-tone technique? We should remind ourselves that most of the major figures of European modern music—Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, Weill—spent the war years in America and that Parisian musical life before and during the occupation was parochial. Messiaen led his students in analyses of Schoenberg works he had never heard and didn't like. The cultural milieu of Schoenberg's music—the writings of Karl Kraus and the paintings of Klimt—was about as far from Messiaen's sensibility as could be imagined. Not surprisingly, then, the music was studied in terms of its techniques rather than its meaning. Messiaen's short-lived serialism was as far from Schoenberg's music as his use of Hindu rhythms, derived from a musical dictionary, was from actual Indian music. The reductive nature of Messiaen's teaching, however, proved to be productive; the misreading of Schoenberg became a new musical gospel for the burgeoning vanguard—most of whose music, unlike Messiaen's, has vanished without a trace.

Ironically, Messiaen's disciples served to heighten his standing in the musical world because most of them were secular. Boulez in particular appropriated and expanded the otherworldly techniques Messiaen had developed to express Catholic theology as he formulated a general theory of musical progress. Although Boulez sometimes depicted his *cher maître* with condescension ("He does not compose; he juxtaposes"), Messiaen could no longer be seen, as he often had been, merely as an eccentric product of the French organ tradition. Even America took notice: Virgil Thomson hailed Messiaen as the "atomic bomb of contemporary music" and the young Leonard Bernstein conducted the ten-movement *Turangalîla* symphony at Boston's Symphony Hall in the winter of 1949.

Messiaen's American reputation took some time to develop, however; recordings by Peter Serkin and the ensemble Tashi in the 1970s finally won over both the public and the musical establishment. American musical taste to a very large extent was formed by students of Messiaen's archrival Nadia Boulanger, whose musical ideal was the refined, restrained style of Gabriel Fauré. Our leading Francophile composers, Copland, Thomson and Rorem, came from religious backgrounds far from Messiaen's gaudy Catholicism. For Thomson (and also for Cage) the crucial figure in French music was Erik Satie, a composer Messiaen despised. Even after hailing Messiaen as the next big thing, the Kansas City–born, Baptist-raised Thomson withdrew his support with a vengeance: The *Trois petites Liturgies*, he wrote, "reduces a pietistic conception of some grandeur to the level of the late Aimee Semple McPherson."

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Around 1950 Messiaen was writing his most experimental music: the *Quatre Études de rythme* for piano, the *Messe de la Pentecôte* (despite the name, an organ composition) and the *Livre d'orgue*, even a stab at *musique concrète*. One of the piano pieces, *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, is considered the breakthrough into the total serialism that dominated European music in the 1950s. Hill and Simeone don't offer much insight into Messiaen's relationship with students who were quickly becoming leaders of the avant-garde: Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis. He was at once their teacher and rival. Did they provoke him into these experimental works or, as this book implies, was Messiaen simply pursuing his own interests? After 1951, however, Messiaen abandoned serialism and devoted himself almost entirely to music based on bird song, an element that had been present in his music since the 1930s. For Loriod he composed a long series of solo piano works, each based on a different bird, as well as two works for piano and orchestra: *Réveil des oiseaux* and *Oiseaux exotiques*. Loriod also accompanied him on bird-watching trips around the globe, aiding him in recording and transcribing bird song. The birds offered Messiaen an escape from both the increasingly doctrinal disputes of the avant-garde and the last phases of Delbos's suffering. Though it may have appeared that Messiaen spent a decade without writing religious music, his opera on St. Francis would later make clear that the composer's ornithological researches were spiritual meditations; bird song was another manifestation of the miraculous.

Messiaen and Loriod prudently waited two years after Delbos's death to get married, and even then kept their marriage secret for several years "if all possibility of gossip was to be avoided." The regularization of his life had two immediate consequences: He completed a series of monumental orchestral works—*Chronochromie*, *Couleurs de la Cité céleste* and *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*—and he finally received national recognition. *Et exspecto* was commissioned by Minister of Culture André Malraux to commemorate the casualties of the two world wars; it premiered in the Sainte-Chapelle. As he had done in the *Quartet for the End of Time* Messiaen chose to address a political situation in religious terms. But Messiaen shared with his Gaullist commissioner an old French appreciation for *la gloire*, and *Et exspecto* filled the Gothic space with a majestic din unmatched since Berlioz's *Requiem*.

With these grand projects Messiaen returned in many ways to the lush, lyrical style of the 1930s, to which he added an aviary of bird calls often played on instruments that suggested the sound of a Balinese gamelan. His late style blossomed in four even more gigantic works: *La Transfiguration*, *Des Canyons aux étoiles* (written for Lincoln Center), the *Livre du Saint Sacrement* for organ and *Saint François d'Assise*, Messiaen's summa, commissioned by the Paris Opera. These works demonstrate a final, blissful irony. As Messiaen's music grew ever vaster and ever more impractical, it also became much more popular in its appeal. *Des Canyons aux étoiles*, inspired by a bird-watching visit to Bryce Canyon, could serve as a soundtrack for a National Geographic special. *Saint François* is a kind of lollipop *Parsifal*, the grandest Sunday school pageant ever conceived. Amazingly, coming from a composer with no prior theatrical experience except in the theater of the church, every moment in *Saint François* seems perfectly calculated and executed, without either sanctimony or longueurs. If, as Picasso said, one had to grow old to paint like a child, Messiaen had to grow old to capture the unquestioning, palpable faith he acquired on his own in childhood and that guided him so constantly through eighty-four years in a dark, uncertain century. ■

The Master of Modernismo

ROBERTO GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA

RUBÉN DARÍO: Selected Writings.
By Rubén Darío. Translated by Andrew Hurley, Greg Simon and Steven F. White. Edited and with an introduction by Ilan Stavans. Penguin. 667 pp. Paper $16.

In Spanish, there is poetry before and after Rubén Darío. The Nicaraguan (1867–1916) was the first major poet in the language since the seventeenth century, the end of the Golden Age whose masters included Garcilaso, Saint John of the Cross, Fray Luis, Góngora, Quevedo and Sor Juana. And despite an abundance of great poets in the twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic—García Lorca, Alberti, Salinas, Cernuda, Neruda, Vallejo, Paz, Palés Matos, Lezama Lima, to name a few—his stature remains unequaled. The poetic revolution led by Darío spread across the Spanish-speaking world and extended to all of literature, not just poetry. He ushered Spanish-language poetry into the modern era by incorporating the aesthetic ideals and modern anxieties of Parnassianism and Symbolism, as Garcilaso had infused Castilian verse with Italianate forms and spirit in the sixteenth century, transforming it forever. Darío and Garcilaso led the two most profound poetic revolutions in Spanish, yet neither is known abroad, except by Hispanists. They have not traveled well, particularly in English-speaking countries, where they are all but unknown.

Darío's case is the most baffling because he is nearly our contemporary, whereas Garcilaso, who lived from 1501 to 1536, can today be safely left on library shelves along with Petrarch, Ronsard and Spenser. Besides, Garcilaso has by now been so thoroughly assimilated into Spanish poetic discourse that it is easy to overlook his presence in the poetry of Neruda and Paz. Darío's innovations, style and even manner are still contemporary, however, as are the polemics that his poetry provoked among other poets, professors and critics. What is more, his influence penetrated all levels of Latin American and Spanish society, where his voice is still audible in the lyrics of popular love songs; the artistic movement that he founded, Modernismo, had a tremendous impact on everything from ornaments to interior design, from furniture to fashion. Darío, more than a Nicaraguan poet or a Latin American poet, was a poet of the Spanish language—and its first literary celebrity, embraced throughout Latin America and Spain as the most original and modern of poetic voices.

Darío published his first major collection of poems, *Azul...*, in 1888. He was 21 and living in Valparaíso, Chile, where he had moved two years earlier in search of a

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broader horizon than that offered by Central America. *Azul...*, a slender book of 134 pages, was to become a turning point in Spanish-language literature, not only for poetry but for prose. Its success is proof of the serendipity at work in literary history. Here was a privately printed book of poetry, written by a virtual unknown, published in a port city that was vibrant and cultured but far from the centers of literary activity in Latin America and Spain: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Madrid and... Paris. As Walter Benjamin famously said, Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century, and this was no less true for the poets, intellectuals, diplomats and exiles of Latin America's fragmented world, which had great cities but no natural center, as New York was for the United States or Paris itself for the French. True, the first anthology of Latin American poetry, *América poética*, was published in Valparaíso by the Argentine Juan María Gutiérrez in 1846, but the Chilean port was no Paris—it wasn't even Madrid.

The initial reactions to Darío were hostile. The great thinker and poet Miguel de Unamuno first said that a feather stuck out from under Darío's hat, a derogatory reference to his Indian background, while Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo—the most influential critic and scholar ever in Spanish—stopped his history of Latin American poetry (the first written) in the 1880s, exactly at the point when Darío and Modernismo began to make their mark. A Francophobe, Menéndez y Pelayo frowned upon Darío's love of French poetry and culture. Fortunately, Darío had the audacity to send *Azul...* to the powerful Spanish critic Juan Valera. Valera wielded his considerable influence as an author, critic and member of the Royal Spanish Academy of the Language to launch the young poet's career with two "letters" about the book, which were printed as prologue in later editions of *Azul....* Brilliant and probing, Valera's letters touch upon everything that is relevant about *Azul...*, and all subsequent commentary on Darío's work is, in some way, a gloss of them. Though also critical of Darío's adoption of French ways, Valera recognized his genius and predicted a bright future for the Nicaraguan—a priceless endorsement by an established personality in the world of Spanish letters.

Another factor that contributed to Darío's sudden celebrity and his itinerant career as ambassador of the new poetry all over the Spanish-speaking world was a new feature of modern life that his poetry reflected: communications. Steam navigation, the transatlantic cable and the proliferation of newspapers—some of them, like Chile's *El Mercurio*, of the highest quality and influence—disseminated literature with a speed never seen before. And it brought together writers from all corners of the Hispanic world with an ease that was also unprecedented. All of them could meet in Paris and become conscious of belonging to a continental literature that transcended individual countries because of the more capacious and swifter ships propelled by steam and by the increased commerce among Latin American nations and between those nations and the rest of the world. Darío's travels and the circulation of his books owed a great deal to these developments, as did his immersion in French literature, something he shared with Latin American artists and intellectuals then and now. *Azul...* was published in a small place, but it appeared at a moment when the world was becoming smaller.

Darío's career was launched by the powerful Spanish critic Juan Valera, who recognized the poet's book Azul... *as a work of genius.*

Rubén Darío was born in the Nicaraguan town of Metapa, now Ciudad Darío. His parents named him Félix Rubén García Sarmiento, and, as he himself boldly admitted, Indian and African blood coursed through his veins. (He later changed his name to the briefer, euphonious Rubén Darío, incorporating a patronymic that his father's family had used; it also has, of course, classical connotations.) Raised in the politically and intellectually active city of León, he acquired there a vast and deep cultural education during childhood and adolescence. He also became thoroughly familiar with contemporary French poets both great and minor. In the process he learned enough French to write passably good poems in it. As for his knowledge of Spanish poetry, it was that of a prodigy, a Mozart of poetry. Tomás Navarro Tomás, the most accomplished expert on Spanish versification in modern times, offered the following statistic after having surveyed the corpus of Darío's poetry: He used thirty-seven different metrical lines and 136 different stanza forms! Some of the metrical and rhyme schemes were of his own invention.

The possibility of becoming so well read in the periphery of the Spanish-speaking world is due to the uniformity of language and culture imposed on their empire by the Catholic monarchs and their successors as well as by advances in commerce and communications. The Spanish empire, organized as a vast bureaucracy, favored writing and learning to promote and conserve cultural and religious orthodoxy. While the cost was high, the benefits were also considerable, one being that a subject could feel connected through writing to the centers of power and learning, both to the viceroyalties in Mexico and Peru, and to Spain itself. Communications and trade resulting from interest in the region by the modern European imperial powers brought to Latin American ports the latest goods, including books, without the restrictions imposed before independence. Darío began to write and publish verse by the age of 12, but his career took off when he moved down the Pacific coast to Chile, a thriving country with a lively artistic and intellectual elite that immediately recognized and rewarded his talents.

What made *Azul...* so influential? It was a mix of poetry and prose (brief stories) in a precious style evoking a timeless, mythic world of fairies, princesses and artists in pursuit of an aesthetic ideal, an ideal of beauty that would restore to the world its lost unity and harmony. This is art's highest mission, and Darío espoused it with religious fervor. (He was a Catholic, but he delved into the occult and other *fin de siècle* fads, as Cathy Jrade has detailed in an essential book, *Rubén Darío and the Romantic Search for Unity: The Modernist Recourse to Esoteric Tradition.*) The artists in *Azul...* are constantly frustrated in their efforts by mindless, decadent aristocrats. There is thus a rift between the ideal pursued and the possibility of its attainment, a constant in Darío's work that accounts for its melancholic undertones. But there are no fissures in the execution of the poems or prose pieces, which seem to have purged from the language anything vulgar or worn out, and to have distilled poetic forms to levels of unimaginable perfection. Spanish had never been written like this. But in all this perfection there is always a sense of longing, of wonder and even self-doubt. This is why Darío chose the swan as the emblem of his poetics: The animal combined artistic purity in his shape and white feathers with the wistful question mark of his curved, elegant neck. Darío drew heavily from classical mythology as well as pre-Columbian American myths and the whole spectrum of Western history and culture. Indeed, culture is always Darío's point of departure, rather than reality, whether his own inner real-

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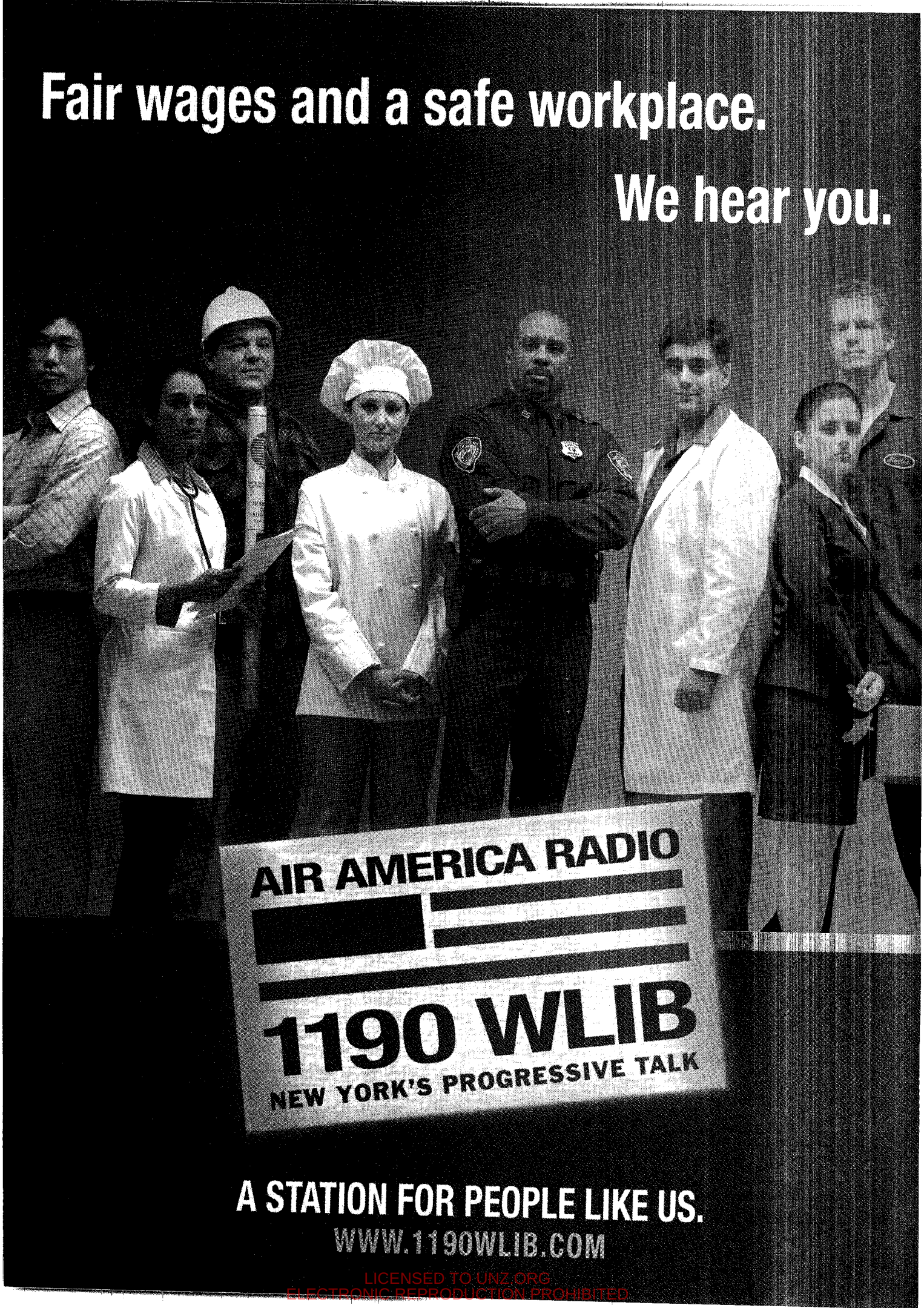

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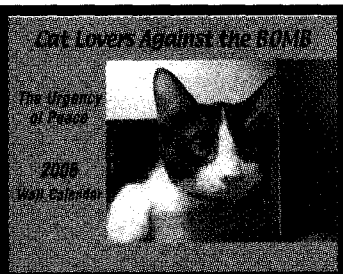

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ity or that of the external world.

If all this seems dated, consider a García Márquez story such as "La Prodigiosa Tarde de Baltazar" ("Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon"), in which a craftsman builds a beautiful birdcage at the request of a child, only to have his parents refuse to pay for it. He winds up drunk, stretched out on the road. It is the same predicament of the artists in *Azul*.... In the story "El Rey Burgués," for example, a poet is left to freeze in the garden cranking a music box for the amusement of his rich patrons. The self-contained temporal scheme and elaborate system of inner correspondences in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are both remnants of the Modernista aesthetics pioneered by Darío, as is the baroque prose of the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, not to mention Borges's exquisite craft as a storyteller. And one would be hard pressed to find a poet writing in Spanish who was not influenced by Darío.

Darío's poetic career unfolded in two halves. The first, the aestheticist Darío, turned into its convex mirror image in the second, the more reflexive and reflective Darío—the deep Darío, as the cliché used to go. The break between the two was announced, according to an earlier school of Darío readers, by the opening line of his 1905 work *Cantos de vida y esperanza: yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía*—"I am the one who would only yesterday say." (In Spanish, this line has become a wistful way of saying you're no longer what you used to be.) The self-critical stance of the *Cantos* led many to speak of two Daríos, one enthralled by empty verbal pyrotechnics and another beset by profound personal and poetic anxieties.

This position is no longer held by authoritative critics. While it is true that Darío was burdened by his own poetry and poetic persona, which had created an entire artistic movement, he was merely making explicit what was implicit in his early books: the futility of the search for an aesthetic ideal coupled with the need to relentlessly continue it; the anguish he felt at the meaninglessness of the universe, the illusory and deceptive nature of language and his sense of emptiness; the ultimate disappointment of erotic pursuits. The two Daríos are, in fact, the same Darío using different poetic conventions to express the same things. A new Darío did emerge in his later poetry, as his work took on a more political tone, reflecting his feeling that his stature entitled him to speak for the Spanish world. This is evident in "Canto a la Argentina," which presages Neruda's *Canto general*. But Darío's politics are at this stage an extension of his earlier ideas about language and art, not a new ideology.

It was in 1898, with the Spanish-American War, that Darío's and Modernismo's politics jelled. While he and other Latin Americans applauded the liberation of Cuba, Puerto Rico and other colonies from the crumbling Spanish empire, they became keenly concerned about the emergence of the United States as a new imperial power. The United States had not only crushed the Spanish army but also, by casting aside the Cuban liberation army, stunted the island's potential political growth and freedom. To Darío and the Modernistas, the Spanish world seemed helpless in the face of American expansionism, not only in politics but, even more important, in culture. Countries that traced their cultural and religious roots back to Rome would now be taken over by a colonial power that was Anglo-Saxon and Protestant and that espoused a pragmatic approach to material progress that was dangerously at odds with their culture. It was José Enrique Rodó, not Darío, who forcefully articulated this widely shared anxiety in "Ariel" (1900), the most influential essay ever written in Latin America. Rodó, an Uruguayan Modernista and an admirer of Darío, argued that the Latin countries ought to remain faithful to their common culture, a civilization of the spirit (hence "Ariel") that, in contrast to the United States, valued art and good taste rather than economic growth and consumer products. Darío echoed this position in rousing poems such as "A Roosevelt," where he speaks on behalf of an America that "still prays to Jesus Christ and still speaks the Spanish tongue." The "still" shows Darío's fear for the future of Latin America: He calls the United States in this poem "el futuro invasor," the future invader.

The Spanish-language poets who came after him and favored the conventionalities of presumably more "natural" poetry in language and prosody rejected the first Darío and embraced the second. But eventually most realized their error. No matter how much they struggled with the musical Darío of "Sonatina," they had to surrender to him. No Spanish-language poet has been the subject of so much writing by other poets. Major poets like Luis Cernuda (1902–63) and Gastón Baquero (1918–97), for instance, mocked the early Darío, yet they granted him so much credit that they ended up helping to reinforce his reputation. Baquero, a Cuban and a "pure poet," had to concede that with Darío "there emerged a sense of the aesthetic dignity of the poem in itself as a careful construc-

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tion, full of self-respect, that no one has been able to abolish." In spite of all that is ephemeral in Darío, he also proclaims that "everything creative, the whole future of literature, is latent in him." His body can be stripped of all its flesh by his critics, he says, "but the bones will be found to be made of diamond." Cernuda, a Spaniard, said that Darío, like his distant ancestors, the natives of the New World, allowed himself to be duped by the Europeans by trading his gold for a handful of shining trinkets. Darío, he claimed, had picked up from the French a tendency to assess the worth of things not in themselves but because they had been valued earlier and often by others. Still, Cernuda could not stop himself from devoting a brainy essay to Darío, if only as a kind of exorcism. Pedro Salinas (1891–1951), another major Spanish poet, wrote an entire book on Darío, as did his countryman, the Nobel Prize winner Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881–1958). And the Mexican poet Octavio Paz (1914–1998) wrote one of his most beautiful and probing essays about the Nicaraguan. Darío's stature as a classic writer seems now beyond dispute. But only in Spanish.

Darío's circulation and reputation in English will not be helped by the publication of this carelessly conceived and executed anthology of his prose and verse. The selection of the poetry is particularly poor, leaving out some of Darío's most important poems. Edited and introduced by Ilan Stavans, a professor of Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College, *Rubén Darío: Selected Writings* includes few of his long poems in their entirety and organizes the collection in a manner that is more confusing than enlightening. The arrangement of the poems, which tries to follow a thematic division made by Darío toward the end of his life, is not chronological. Hence there is no sense of Darío's poetic evolution, as if his work were created in a timeless void. The subdivisions draw their headings from the lines of a poem whose translation is particularly appalling. Greg Simon and Steven White's poetry translations are not only awkward; they make basic errors that are beyond the usual disputes about word choice. For instance, where Darío describes himself in his former poetic state as "muy siglo diez y ocho" (meaning that he was very "eighteenth century" in taste), the translation inexplicably reads "and those that come from the eighteenth century." A different kind of error is found in the translation of the line from "Coloquio de los centauros" (a major long poem from which only a stanza is excerpted here) that reads "cada hoja de cada árbol canta un propio cantar," rendered as "Each leaf on the trees sings with its own goal." Leaves with goals? This terrible assemblage of words not only completely misses the rhythm created by the repetition of sounds; worse, it hardly conveys what the Spanish says, which is more like "On every tree each leaf sings its own song." It would be embarrassing and painful to compile such mistranslations.

The English renditions are simply not poetic, which is the worst thing a translator can do to a Darío poem. And contrary to Stavans's assertion in the introduction that this anthology is "the most ambitious attempt ever to make the Nicaraguan poet comfortable in English," there are others that are better, one as recent as 2004. In 1965 Lysander Kemp, a truly accomplished translator, brought out *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío*, with Paz's powerful essay as prologue (the book came out in paperback in 1988). For the poetry, the reader would be much better served by going to those books. Andrew Hurley's translation of the prose is better, but not brilliant (as Darío nearly always is), and it may be the only valuable contribution this book makes. Hurley is no Gregory Rabassa, Edith Grossman, Margaret Sayers Peden, Esther Allen or Sarah Arvio, the leading translators of Spanish into English, but he is reliable and workmanlike.

Stavans's introduction lacks scholarly credibility or academic reliability. It is riddled with clichés (Darío is a "man for all seasons"), lacks a single new idea worth considering and does no justice to the considerable body of Darío criticism. Like the translations, it contains elementary mistakes, some laughable. For instance, Stavans attributes the famous line encouraging poets to reject Darío by twisting the swan's neck to the Mexican Modernista Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, when it was written by his compatriot Enrique González Martínez. He also blithely declares that "Latin America never had a Romantic movement per se," an elementary error that he could have avoided by reading any history of Latin American literature or one of those academic critics Stavans derides with unearned, comic self-assurance. Stavans even writes that Darío's "health deteriorated rapidly in the years following World War I," when the poet had been dead for two years at war's end in 1918. His health could hardly have gotten worse.

There are poets condemned to remain within their own language. Because of its many failings, this anthology cannot possibly help Darío overcome this fate. ■

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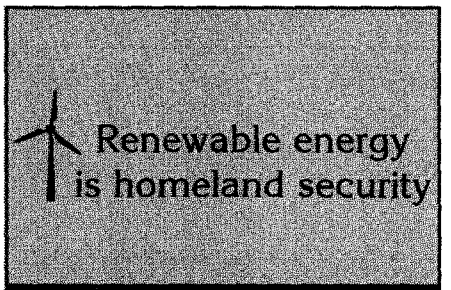

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FILMS

The Unquiet American

STUART KLAWANS

WHY WE FIGHT • LOOKING FOR COMEDY IN THE MUSLIM WORLD • TRISTRAM SHANDY: A COCK AND BULL STORY

In the family of documentary filmmakers, Eugene Jarecki might figure as a younger sibling to Michael Moore: the sober, responsible little fellow who tails a riotous big brother. Moore plays to the camera; Jarecki keeps himself offscreen. Moore ridicules his political enemies; Jarecki respects them, letting the likes of Richard Perle and William Kristol make their best case for the Iraq War. When you watch Jarecki's *Why We Fight*, you find that opinions are identified as such, and dutifully balanced, and kept distinct from assertions of fact—a procedure that has often been prescribed for Moore and would probably hit him like a dose of lithium, smoothing him into respectability at the expense of smothering his oomph. Nobody would presume to medicate Jarecki—and yet, as sometimes happens with little brothers, he is in his quiet way the more unruly of the two.

His new film does little more than explain why we, the United States, fight in Iraq, and also why we have fought in general for the past sixty years. It expounds at length upon a canonical text—President Eisenhower's farewell address, in which he famously warned against "the military-industrial complex"—while piecing together a portrait of one ordinary citizen, Wilton Sekzer, whose son was among those murdered by the World Trade Center attackers. On top of that, Jarecki gives you glancing stories about other citizens (a strikingly hopeless young man who has just enlisted in the Army, a disillusioned woman now retired from an Air Force career); illustrated lectures about past US military actions; Inquiring Photographer interviews conducted in small American towns and in Iraq; professional accounts of the beginning of the Iraq War, as witnessed by the pilots who dropped the first bombs. All this and a little film history, too: Jarecki traces his title, *Why We Fight*, to the series of troop indoctrination films that Frank Capra directed during World War II for the Army Signal Corps.

How does all this disparate material fit together? Uneasily.

Jarecki starts with a small portion of the Eisenhower speech, elaborated with a montage of archival footage and some soundtrack music in the Philip Glass vein. Moviegoers who have seen Errol Morris's *The Fog of War* will undergo a moment of déjà vu—though not so prolonged a moment as readers of *The Nation* will experience later, when Jarecki sets out to demonstrate that a military-industrial complex exists today, and that Dick Cheney and a company called Halliburton have something to do with it. I suppose this information will be fresh to many Americans, and I admire the precise, light touch with which Jarecki gives them the news. But except for a few brief scenes of a weapons trade show, where a pitchman for Kellogg Brown & Root performs card tricks before an audience of procurement officers, these sections of *Why We Fight* are devoid of memorable moments. All that sticks in the mind are phrases (bring home the bacon, revolving door) and an impression of Eisenhower's probity.

Surrounding this presentation, and sometimes intercut with it, are Jarecki's other items: lessons from talking heads (hello, Gore Vidal!), perfunctory chats with Middle Americans (who might have had ideas about why we're in Iraq but didn't share many of them), a visit to a bomb factory, more World War II footage, assembled according to an order that remains mysterious to me, even after a second viewing. Michael Moore, for all his jokey eclecticism, would have made you understand, and feel, each change of topic. Jarecki, though a far more expository filmmaker, has jumped around as if out of control. He can't find a line through this vast and bloody subject—until, remarkably, he does, in the last fifteen minutes or so.

That's when Lieut. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, a retired Pentagon analyst, stops functioning in the film as an expert witness and becomes a character, living out

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her estrangement from the forces she once served. You see that she has had to abandon something dear to her. So has William Solomon, the young Army volunteer, who is shown putting a few mementos into storage and moving out of his now-empty childhood apartment. As the film reaches its conclusion, the import of these characters' stories converges with that of Wilton Sekzer, whose loss is the most profound of all.

A Vietnam veteran and retired New York City cop, Sekzer wholeheartedly supported the war against Iraq, finding in it some small relief for his rage and grief over the death of his son. Then he heard George Bush deny, on television, that his Administration had ever linked Saddam Hussein to the World Trade Center attack. With that, all the rage and grief seem to have struck Sekzer again at full force, joined by a new sense of betrayal.

Why do we fight? "Because we're hurt, and our leaders lie," Sekzer might say. To which Kwiatkowski could add: "Because it's useful to the people in power, who don't give a damn who gets killed." And Solomon might chime in: "Because we've got nothing better to do, and the Army's hiring."

Not one answer, but three unruly, devastating truths.

In Albert Brooks's new film, we get another plausible explanation of why we fight—and it may be the most unsettling of all. *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World* devilishly supposes that Brooks is no longer simply the character he has long played onscreen: an irritable, carping, self-deluded entertainer. Now he is all of those things and a State Department official.

All right, a State Department freelancer. (Brooks never gets the regular jobs.) Summoned to Washington from his scene of quotidian failure in LA, he is told that the President wants to go beyond "the normal ways of understanding" other cultures—"spying and fighting"—to gain insight into Islam by discovering what makes Muslims laugh. There's no money in the assignment, and Brooks is worried about the need to write a 500-page report. (For the rest of the movie, that requirement will be like a bad tooth to him, demanding to be probed by his tongue.) But the State Department is more polite to him than was Penny Marshall at his last audition, so off he flies to India and Pakistan, with no clue about what he's doing and no ideas in his head, other than that he's a famous and important person.

This is unquestionably new territory for Brooks the writer-director, who has never before ventured farther than Nevada (except for a foray into the World Beyond, in *Defending Your Life*). The Indian travelogue he gives us in *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World* is a novelty—though perhaps not so large a novelty as it may appear. In the first place, Brooks the movie character is a magnet for whatever iron filings of American culture might be lying about New Delhi. National identity clings to him like a fuzz, padding him against direct contact with anything foreign. In the second place, Brooks retains his essential gag of being the comedian who isn't funny. When he flops before an uncomprehending Indian audience (while doing some of his vintage stand-up routines), he isn't being new, just redundant.

Yet I think Brooks has worked a real innovation into *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World*. Whereas his humor ordinarily depends on deferring the punch line indefinitely, here he has delivered a punch line (only one) right where it belongs, at the end of the movie. You won't mind my telling, will you? There's no spoiling a joke that's meant to be unfunny. It turns out that Brooks, like a true State Department official, has made life better for one educated, middle-class woman (played by the delightful Sheetal Sheth). And all it took—laugh it up!—was a catastrophe inflicted on two nations.

But matters of geopolitics aside, the question remains: What can you see for fun on Friday night? The best answer I can give is the preposterously funny, perpetually inventive, implausibly successful *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*.

Because this film adapts a masterwork of eighteenth-century English literature, you will be glad to know that the tone is appropriately high. *Tristram Shandy* begins (more or less) with an off-color pun, punctuated by an offscreen animal noise. From this, students of Laurence Sterne's novel (or whatever) will immediately recognize the faithfulness of Martin Hardy's screenplay and Michael Winterbottom's direction. Sterne wrote pee-pee jokes, and you will get pee-pee jokes, whether from the text (as in the scene of Tristram's circumcision by a window sash) or from the filmmakers' imagination (as in the scene of Steve Coogan dropping a hot chestnut down his pants).

For those of you who can't remember at which Starbucks you left your lecture notes, I will explain that Sterne, the Albert Brooks of the eighteenth-century York-

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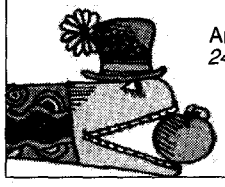

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shire clergy, wrote *Tristram Shandy* as a book about writing a book. His narrator, Tristram, was attempting to compose his memoirs but found the process so befuddling that after hundreds of pages he couldn't get himself born. The analogy, of course, is a movie about making a movie. Coogan therefore appears in the film as the onscreen narrator, Tristram; as Tristram's father, Walter (by virtue of family resemblance); and as "Steve Coogan," a self-serious comic actor who is worried that the movie of *Tristram Shandy* might turn out to be about someone other than himself. This someone other is "Rob Brydon," a less famous comic actor who has been hired to play Uncle Toby, and who teases "Steve Coogan" with the relentlessness of a ventriloquist's evil dummy.

Winterbottom and Hardy might have tried narrating *Tristram Shandy* simultaneously with the making of *Tristram Shandy*, in the Sterne fashion; but they chose instead to compose the film in two large movements. The first consists of scenes from the early parts of the book; the second (which begins abruptly, at the moment of Tristram's birth) consists of scenes of the film crew on location, as they flirt, bicker, give interviews, look at the rushes, negotiate for more money and worry over rewrites. Part one is a kind of temporal maze, in which characters rush about from one time frame to another. Part two is a spatial maze, in which characters spend a leisurely evening and night wandering about their hotel and its grounds.

This second part of the film calls to mind Fassbinder's *Beware of a Holy Whore*, with vodka tonics substituted for Cuba libres. But it also substitutes tenderness, in Sterne's fashion, for Fassbinder's harsh laughter. "If the audience could just see Walter pick up his baby," Coogan says, arguing for a better role for himself, "they would forgive him everything." After which Winterbottom shows the unforgivable "Coogan" picking up his baby, changing his diaper and cooing him back to sleep.

Somehow, despite our thinking about it, babies get born, movies get made and people stumble temporarily into their better selves. If you've forgotten that this is cause for celebration, *Tristram Shandy* will remind you. ■

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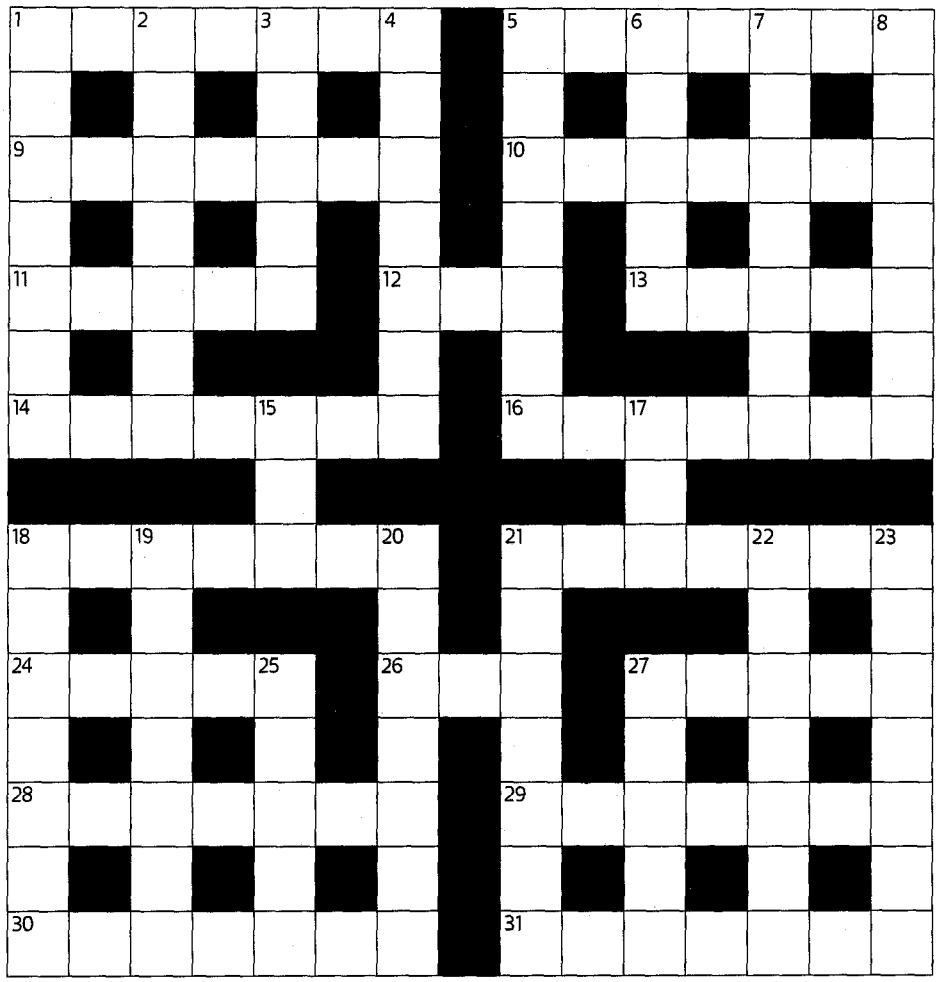
PUZZLE NO. 3021

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Give credit to an old-fashioned writer? (7)

5 If they want to know who you are, they might eye this, for a return of the entrance guard. (4,3)

9 Get someone out of the cloth, perhaps showing zeal around here in Paris. (7)

10 You evidently claim to be Ezra, as a way to corral things. (7)

11 When they feted you, they perhaps did this and 13 to you. (5)

12 and **18** down A group of nasty people, possibly having letters with the postage wrong. (3,7)

13 Had a meal with the princess and Little Edward, and did about a quarter of it. (5)

14 Was Italy, when they got rid of Mussolini, as one figured? (7)

16 No leach wiggled as in the old Air Force song they carried on in this! (7)

18 Sounds like what might be applied to nutmeg is even bigger! (7)

21 You can evidently do this kind of puzzle, but such things are sometimes said in a tight-lipped fashion. (7)

24, 26 and **27** Exceptionally beneficial to your hair, especially for the high-flying kind. (5,8)

28 Wasn't in the money, and hurried, too. (4-3)

29 Rather reserved, but ran with the wind whipping in and out. (7)

30 Asked for ham and eggs, perhaps, being properly set up. (7)

31 Your dress to the French makes things hard to understand! (7)

DOWN

1 Everything on nothing—joined, therefore permitted. (7)

2 Engaged in a little exercise at the bar—or just talked about it? (7)

3 Perhaps one laid out sloppily by the classic story. (5)

4 It's always someone like Mr. Kennedy that gets turned out. (7)

5 Summer in Paris—vain over it? Confused? That shows social unawareness. (7)

6 Sulked because of having just two wheels to run around on? (5)

7 Another name for a wooden pin that is found right in the underground motorway. (7)

8 An important national purchase that has part of a tame oath to study. (7)

15 and **17** Tom gets only horse food, in China! (6)

18 See 12 across

19 The film, after you've taken some pictures, is shown up as being a little shady. (7)

20 A bit "nicey"—but that's the way oil has to be. (7)

21 A sport in some countries, which might be a somewhat hairy touch-up. (7)

22 Extremely digital material that often needs cutting—one is upset in the tail of it. (7)

23 So it gets up in seemingly nice surroundings, to a point—but only mathematical ratios are responsible. (7)

25 Not so common, but are found inside a couple of those readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic things. (5)

27 An English house, which almost suggests a type of vehicle. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3020

G	A	T	H	E	R	I	N	G		B	E	S	O	M
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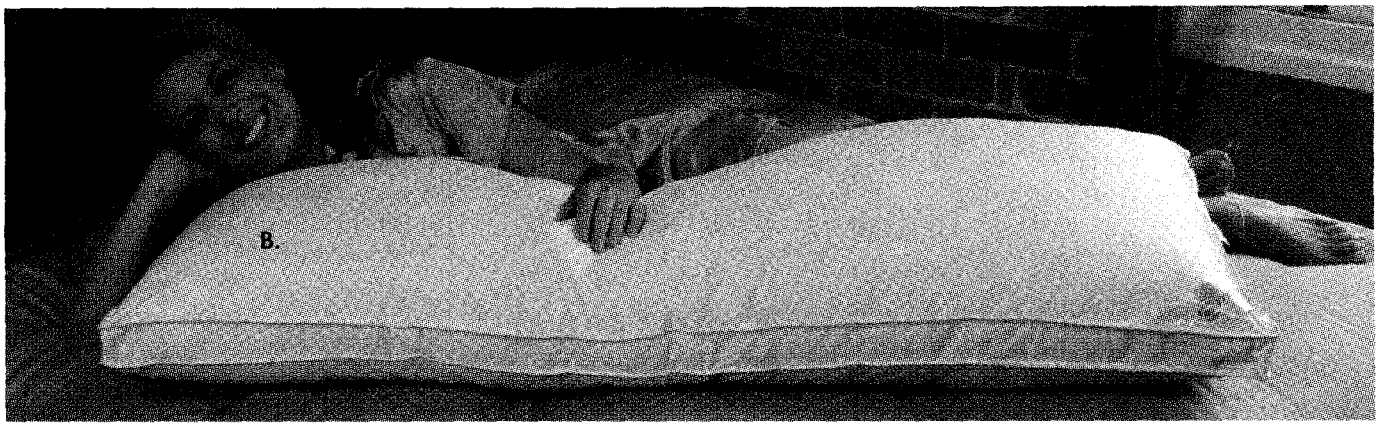

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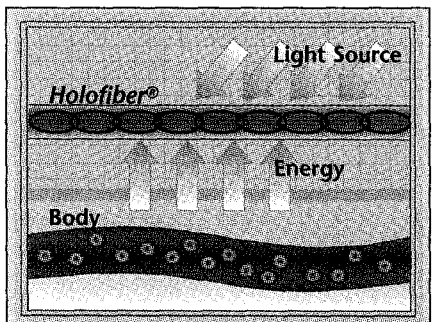

1. Ambient light hits Holofiber
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For the first time, this revolutionary product is available to help improve your sleep. The ***Holofiber***® pillow, mattress pad and body pillow can raise the quality of your sleep. Now you won't just sleep; you can help your body recover from the physical stress of the day.

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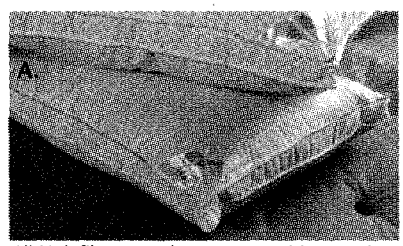

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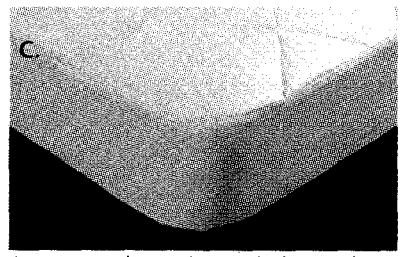

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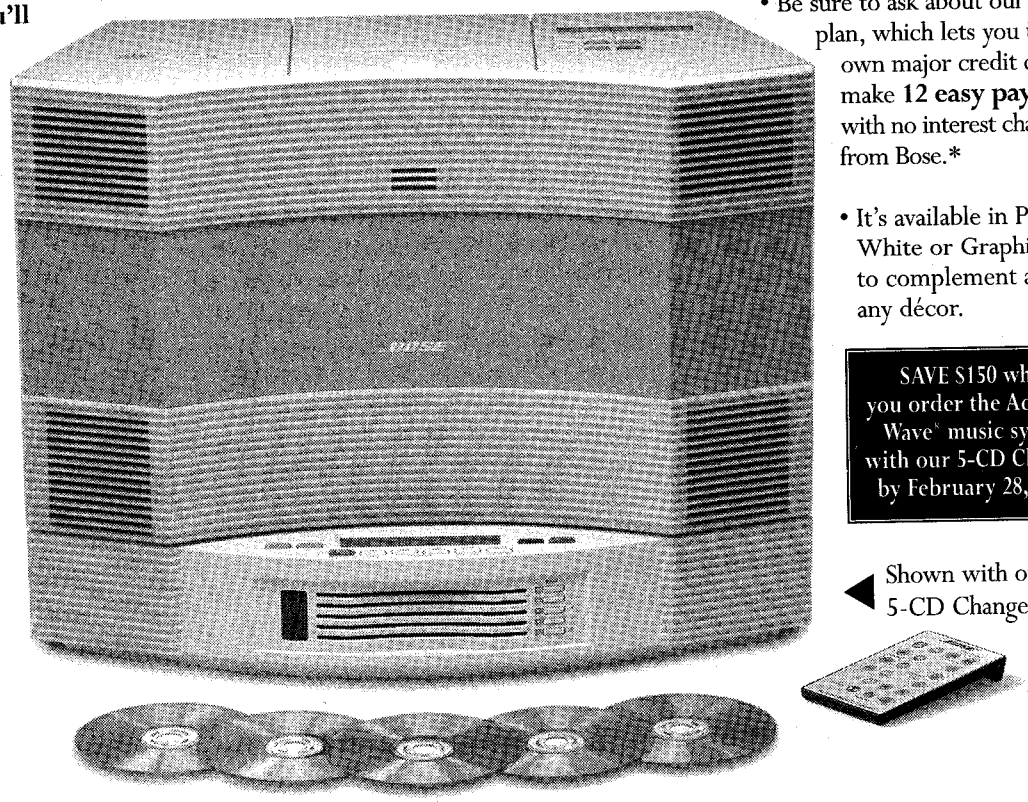

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